

Conceptual Metaphors of Life in Selected Contemporary British Novels

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Abstract—This study investigates conceptual metaphors of life in contemporary British novels using the theoretical frameworks of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Kövecses (2002). Both structural and ontological metaphors are analyzed to reveal how these conceptual metaphors represent the authors' perspectives on life. The primary research methods employed are documentary analysis and descriptive research, supplemented by both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The findings of the study indicate that ten conceptual metaphors are used to represent life, including (1) LIFE IS A JOURNEY, (2) LIFE IS PASSING OF TIME, (3) LIFE IS A STORY, (4) LIFE IS A WAR, (5) LIFE IS A GAME, (6) LIFE IS AN ENTITY, (7) LIFE IS A CONTAINER, (8) LIFE IS A PERSONAL POSSESSION, (9) LIFE IS A PERSON, and (10) LIFE IS A MACHINE. Each metaphor provides a unique perspective on the essence of life. It concludes that conceptual metaphors are embedded in daily life.

Index Terms—conceptual metaphors, contemporary British novels, structural metaphors, ontological metaphors, life

I. INTRODUCTION

Cognitive linguistics was a method of studying language that emerged during the 1970s and has gained growing popularity since the 1980s. Numerous investigations have been conducted in Vietnam as well as throughout the world. As seen from a cognitive linguistics perspective, most of them concentrate on semantics and a deeper understanding of the linguistic application of conceptual metaphor.

According to Gibbs (2008), metaphor runs so deeply within the essence of human language that we've encountered its presence across diverse contexts throughout history, such as a significant inspiration, a substitute for synonyms and polysemy, a way to bridge a lexical gap, and many more. Indeed, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) point out, metaphor plays a vital role in how individuals think and behave daily. Metaphor is an intriguing means of meaning-conveyance in literary works because of its distinctive style and range of expressions; it is regarded as a linguistic art form distinguished.

Though the notion of life is frequently addressed in our daily lives and discussions, its genuine meaning and definition cannot be expressed in a single or two words. Happiness and despair, achievement and disappointment, solace and agony, inspiration and annoyance, possibilities and obstacles, and disappointment, solace and suffering, inspiration and annoyance, opportunities and barriers, love and hate, solace and grief, and attempt and surrender are all part of life. As a result, truly comprehending the concept of life without any relationship to other concrete notions or tangible objects is difficult.

For all these reasons, the researcher carried out this study in the hope that it will help Vietnamese readers and learners recognize and understand metaphor in a new way and see that conceptual metaphor is something more familiar to us in our life.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A. Conceptual Metaphor

Kövecses (2002, p. 4) defines "conceptual metaphor" as a means to understand one conceptual domain in terms of another, commonly expressed as CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN A IS CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN B. This approach allows for the interpretation of an abstract concept through a more tangible or familiar concept. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain that the use of conceptual metaphors often occurs automatically, without conscious thought, providing a natural mechanism for understanding complex ideas. Kövecses (2007, p. 13) further refines the definition: "A conceptual metaphor is understanding one domain of experience (typically abstract) in terms of another (typically concrete)". This theoretical framework forms the foundation for analyzing metaphors in literary contexts.

(a). Structural Metaphors

Structural metaphors are among the most common types of metaphors encountered in everyday language. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 15) describe structural metaphors as metaphors in which one concept is structured in terms of another. This type of metaphor relies on mappings from a source domain to a target domain, allowing abstract ideas to be expressed through well-defined and often concrete experiences. Kövecses (2002, p. 37) states, "The source domain

provides a relatively rich knowledge structure for the target concept”. Thus, in a structural metaphor, the source concept enriches the target concept by imposing a familiar cognitive framework onto it.

Unlike orientational and ontological metaphors, structural metaphors lack a physical basis—both the source and target domains are often abstractions. However, these metaphors offer organized and comprehensible representations of abstract concepts by applying a structured, familiar pattern from one domain onto another.

(b). *Ontological Metaphors*

Ontological metaphors are distinct from structural metaphors in that they present experiences as objects, substances, or containers, providing an initial framework for further structuring and understanding complex ideas. Kövecses (2002, p. 328) notes that ontological metaphors allow individuals to conceptualize their experiences without specifying the exact nature of these objects, substances, or containers. These metaphors serve as cognitive anchors, often forming the foundation for more elaborate structural metaphors. A common example is personification, where non-human entities are understood as possessing human qualities. *Are you in the race on Sunday?* (Race as a CONTAINER), *Are you going to the race?* (Race as an OBJECT), and *There was a lot of good running in the race* (Running as a SUBSTANCE in a CONTAINER) are the specific examples. These examples illustrate how ontological metaphors allow people to navigate complex experiences by envisioning them as concrete entities (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

(c). *Oriental Metaphors*

Oriental metaphors structure concepts based on spatial orientation, such as up-down, front-back, or in-out. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that these spatial orientations are inherently linked to human experience and perception of the physical world. Therefore, orientational metaphors derive from physical and cultural experiences, shaping the way people evaluate concepts. For example, MORE IS UP (e.g., *Speak up, please.*), LESS IS DOWN (e.g., *Keep your voice down, please.*), HAPPY IS UP (e.g., *She’s feeling up today.*), SAD IS DOWN (e.g., *I’m feeling down.*), etc.

Kövecses (2010) notes that upward orientation often correlates with positive evaluation, while downward orientation is linked with negative evaluation. Due to their reliance on universal physical experiences, orientational metaphors are often present across cultures, though specific orientations may vary.

B. *Novels and Life*

(a). *Novels*

According to Rees (1973, p. 106), a novel is “a fictitious prose narrative of considerable length in which characters and actions representative of real life are portrayed in a plot of more or less complexity”. Over time, novels have evolved to encompass a wide variety of forms and styles. Burgess (2014, p. 1) observes that novels as a genre have expanded to include diverse styles, such as picaresque, epistolary, Gothic, romantic, realist, and historical. The diversity in genre allows novels to explore an array of themes, including the concept of life, which is often depicted through metaphors that reflect the human experience.

(b). *Conceptual Metaphor of Life*

Life is a central topic in human experience, yet its essence is difficult to encapsulate in a single definition. Life encompasses a complex blend of positive and negative elements—joys and sorrows, achievements and setbacks, comfort and suffering, inspiration and frustration, opportunities and challenges. Lakoff and Turner’s (1989) work, *More than cool reason: A field guide to poetic metaphor*, is one of the primary studies investigating conceptual metaphors that describe life. Most research on life metaphors has focused on poetry, leaving room for further exploration in prose and other literary forms.

The scarcity of studies focusing on life metaphors in literature, especially novels, indicates an opportunity for deeper analysis. This study aims to contribute to this field by examining how life is conceptualized metaphorically in contemporary British novels. By analyzing life metaphors in literary works, we can better understand how authors use conceptual metaphors to convey complex ideas and emotions associated with life, thus bridging the abstract and concrete in literary expressions.

III. METHODS

This study employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches, including contrastive and descriptive analyses, to achieve its objectives. The qualitative aspect involves contrastive analysis and descriptive exploration, aiming to explain how conceptual metaphors of life are used in selected British novels from the 21st century.

Here is a list of nine novels that, for various reasons, have been considered some of the greatest works of literature ever written, as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
21ST CENTURY'S SELECTED BRITISH NOVELS

No	Novels	Authors	Years
1	Half Broken Things	Morag Joss	2003
2	Millennium People	James Graham Ballard	2003
3	Black Butterfly	Mark Gatiss	2008
4	Wolf Hall	Hilary Mantel	2009
5	Me Before You	Jojo Moyes	2012
6	Oblivion	Anthony Horowitz	2012
7	Life After Life	Kate Atkinson	2013
8	The Unexpected Consequences of Love	Jill Mansell	2014
9	The Girl on the Train	Paula Hawkins	2015

Finally, the researcher must respond to the following queries: What conceptual metaphors of life can be found in the selected British novels? What do the conceptual metaphors of life utilized in the selected British novels mean?

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Structural Metaphors of Life in the Selected British Novels

In this study, nine contemporary British novels were investigated, and five structural metaphors of life were identified. Table 2 provides information about five source domains clarifying LIFE. Overall, it can be observed that the most frequent usage is LIFE IS A JOURNEY with 32.61%, and the second position is LIFE IS PASSING OF TIME (28.26%). LIFE IS A WAR, LIFE IS A STORY, and LIFE IS A GAME are much lower with 19.56%, 10.87%, and 8.70%, respectively.

TABLE 2
FREQUENCY OF STRUCTURAL METAPHORS OF LIFE IN SELECTED BRITISH NOVELS

No	Structural metaphors of life	Number of metaphorical expressions	%
1	LIFE IS A JOURNEY	15	32.61
2	LIFE IS PASSING OF TIME	13	28.26
3	LIFE IS A WAR	9	19.56
4	LIFE IS A STORY	5	10.87
5	LIFE IS A GAME	4	8.70
Total		46	100

(a). Life Is a Journey

According to Hornby (2000), a journey is described as "an act of travelling from one place to another, especially when they are far apart" (p. 699). Travelers need means of transport to help them quickly reach their destination. However, they also have to overcome a huge number of impediments on their way to get their points.

LIFE IS A JOURNEY is a metaphor where a region of LIFE is articulated in the context of JOURNEY. To make sense of these correlations based on the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, by employing the source domain metaphor "journey" and applying it to "life" as the target domain, one can observe various mappings occurring, many of which feature at least one commonly used metaphorical reference in everyday thinking.

Several metaphorical expressions in British novels stem from the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY during the period of time from 2003 to 2015 as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING LIFE IS A JOURNEY

Novels	Metaphorical examples
The Unexpected Consequences of Love	"Suicide had been mentioned, but no one had died. Had Sophie been the one who'd attempted to <i>end her own life</i> ?" (p. 25)
The Girl on the Train	"He's <i>the big hole in my life</i> , in the middle of my soul. Or maybe he was just the beginning of it". (p. 6)
Me Before You	"You never know, this might be the <i>start of a whole new independent life</i> for Will". (p. 88)
Life After Life	"Thirteen is quite grown-up nowadays. And <i>life can be very short</i> , you know," Izzie added, taking out a long ebony and ivory cigarette holder". (p. 94)
Oblivion	"And even if he did, how could he allow Reynolds to <i>end his life</i> , to enslave him eternally to the demon Isobel had fought so hard to save him from?" (p. 92)

Life can be a trip that takes us down unexpected paths, introduces us to new people, and teaches us new things. In our pursuit of happiness and fulfillment, there are some roads that cause us to abruptly *veer so far off track*. Making matters worse, there are times in life when *a detour in life* might arise and take us in a new direction that is full of problems and challenges and ultimately results in *starting a whole new life*.

TABLE 4
MAPPING BETWEEN THE SOURCE *JOURNEY* AND THE TARGET *LIFE*

Novels	JOURNEY	LIFE
The Unexpected Consequences of Love	"Suicide had been mentioned, but no one had died. Had Sophie been the one who'd attempted to <i>end her own life</i> ?" (p. 25)	The journey will come to an end, that's when life stops.
The Girl On The Train	"He's <i>the big hole in my life</i> , in the middle of my soul. Or maybe he was just the beginning of it". (p. 6)	There are obstacles along the way, just like life there are difficult barriers.
The Girl On The Train	"I wonder whether they are there, whether he knows, whether he's left, or <i>whether he's still living a life he's yet to discover is a lie</i> ". (p. 9)	Exploring each trip is just like exploring the nature of life.
Me Before You	"You never know, this might be the <i>start of a whole new independent life</i> for Will". (p. 88)	Life has a beginning point.
Life After Life	"Sylvie said they mustn't be scared of the influenza. ' <i>Life must go on</i> ,' she said". (p. 57)	Life, even if it is sometimes delayed, will still have to continue to the destination.
Life After Life	"'Thirteen is quite grown-up nowadays. And <i>life can be very short</i> , you know,' Izzie added, taking out a long ebony and ivory cigarette holder". (p. 94)	Life's distance can be very short like a shortcut
Life After Life	"'Why is everything an "adventure" with you?' Sylvie said irritably to Izzie. 'Because <i>life is an adventure</i> , of course.' 'I would say <i>it was more of an endurance race</i> ,' Sylvie said. ' <i>Or an obstacle course</i> '". (p. 114)	Life is full of miracles like adventure.

(b). *Life Is Passing of Time*

Time can be expressed in terms of concrete measuring units such as minutes, hours, and years. A day can be defined as the period of time between the time it becomes light in the morning and the time it becomes dark in the evening. The relationship between lifetime and the passage of time can be related using the ideas presented above. To be more exact, the phrase "lifetime" refers to the amount of time that humans live, last, and die (see Table 5).

TABLE 5
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING *LIFETIME IS PASSING OF TIME*

Novels	Metaphorical examples
Me Before You	"She glanced over at her father. 'I can't put <i>my whole life</i> on hold just because of Will's mental state". (p. 38)
The Girl On The Train	"He's waiting for me to start, but it's hard, harder than I thought it was going to be. I've kept this secret for so long – a decade, <i>more than a third of my life</i> ". (p. 42)
Life After Life	"Pamela sighed the sigh of someone with <i>a lifetime behind them</i> already and sat at the table". (p. 42)
Oblivion	"He snickered. 'You'd be surprised? Really? <i>You've known Ash your entire life</i> .' The girl thrives on confrontation". (p. 8)

The common expressions used to refer to the notion of time, such as *most of*, *spend*, and *the rest of*, can be found a great deal in British novels with the aim to comprehend the lifetime of a person. With such comprehension, people's lives can be measured in terms of days or years using expressions like *in the last moments* of his life, *more hours* of my life, *in the last twenty-seven years* of my life, *day-to-day life*, *more hours* of my life, or *the best six months* of my entire life.

In light of these instances, it appears that English speakers frequently reflect on the extremely abstract concept of life in the context of time passing. That kind of thinking would make it easier for people to understand the more enigmatic concept of life.

TABLE 6
MAPPING BETWEEN THE SOURCE *PASSING OF TIME* AND THE TARGET *LIFE*

Novels	PASSING OF TIME	LIFE
Me Before You	"She glanced over at her father. 'I can't put <i>my whole life</i> on hold just because of Will's mental state". (p. 38)	Life is a period of time consisting of many different stages, broken but connected seamlessly.
Me Before You	"He told them that watching other people live even <i>half the life</i> he had planned for himself was unbearable, a kind of torture". (p. 56)	Life sometimes takes up half of the time it will pass.
Me Before You	"I've done more, lived more, in the last six months than <i>in the last twenty-seven years of my life</i> ". (p. 105)	Life is finite according to each beat of time, so it can be measured by specific numbers.
Me Before You	"'It has been,' I told him, ' <i>the best six months of my entire life</i> '". (p. 107)	Life is finite according to each beat of time, so it can be measured by specific numbers.
The Girl on the Train	"He's waiting for me to start, but it's hard, harder than I thought it was going to be. I've kept this secret for so long – a decade, <i>more than a third of my life</i> ". (p. 42)	Life is finite according to each beat of time, so it can be measured by specific numbers.
Life After Life	"Pamela sighed the sigh of someone with <i>a lifetime behind them</i> already and sat at the table". (p. 42)	Time has passed just like life in the past has been left behind.
Life After Life	"'Looked at you?' Ursula said. <i>Teddy in the last moments of his life</i> , knowing he was going to die". (p. 283)	Life can materialize into every last moment in time.

(c). *Life Is a Story*

According to Hornby (2000, p. 1281), a story is understood as “a description of events and people that the writer or speaker has invented in order to entertain people”. There may be different phases in a novel to describe the shifting characteristics of characters. Little things that happen around the main character can add up to a fascinating novel.

TABLE 7
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING *LIFE IS A STORY*

Novels	Metaphorical examples
Life After Life	“Eva, on the other hand, loved being photographed. She didn’t just want to be in photographs, she wanted to be in a film. ‘Ein movie.’ She was going to go to Hollywood (‘one day’) and play herself, ‘ <i>the story of my life</i> ’, she said”. (p. 217)
Oblivion	“The poem. He’d taken them right into the middle of it—this ballad that felt as if it <i>told the story of a previous life</i> . One they’d shared together, just like this”. (p. 83)
The Unexpected Consequences of Love	“Dammit, of course he had. <i>Story of her life</i> ”. (p. 7) “The other exciting development had occurred last week when Marguerite’s agent had been contacted by a U.S.-based film producer keen on turning <i>her life story</i> into a movie”. (p. 34)
Wolf Hall	“They watch him for evidence of his intentions, good or ill. Their faces say, we are two women with <i>nothing left but our life stories</i> ”. (p. 548)

It is true that a life is frequently viewed as a story; to be more precise, every day is a page, and people have the potential to create the beautiful story for their own lives, even though examples of this conceptual metaphor do not frequently exist in British novels.

TABLE 8
MAPPING BETWEEN THE SOURCE *A STORY* AND THE TARGET *LIFE*

Novels	A STORY	LIFE
Life After Life	“She was going to go to Hollywood (‘one day’) and play herself, ‘ <i>the story of my life</i> ’, she said”. (p. 217)	Life is like a story with a plot, characters, and an end.
Oblivion	“The poem. He’d taken them right into the middle of it—this ballad that felt as if it <i>told the story of a previous life</i> . One they’d shared together, just like this”. (p. 83)	Each individual’s life is told as stories are passed down through the narrator’s words.
The Unexpected Consequences of Love	“Dammit, of course he had. <i>Story of her life</i> ”. (p. 7)	Life is like a story with a plot, characters, and an end.
Wolf Hall	“The other exciting development had occurred last week when Marguerite’s agent had been contacted by a U.S.-based film producer keen on turning <i>her life story</i> into a movie”. (p. 34)	Life is like a story with a plot, characters, and an end.

(d). *Life Is a War*

When there is ferocious rivalry between groups, businesses, or nations, it is called a war. When considering life as A WAR, it becomes clear that each person standing on the precipice between life and death must fight for their survival. To further comprehend this concept, some examples from British novels are presented in Table 9.

TABLE 9
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING *LIFE IS A WAR*

Novels	Metaphorical examples
Wolf Hall	“Every man should be a <i>soldier once in his life</i> ”. (p. 533)
	“ <i>Her life was all duty</i> . She kept twelve paupers in her house at Woking and once she made me kneel down with a basin and wash their yellow feet, she’s lucky I didn’t throw upon them”. (p. 562)
Life After Life	““They call it honky-tonk, I believe,” Izzie said. A woman began to sing, raw and American. She sounded as if she had <i>spent her life in a prison cell</i> . ‘Ida Cox,’ Izzie said. ‘She’s a Negress. Isn’t she extraordinary?’” (p. 103)
Oblivion	“Confusion marked her expression. ‘ <i>You saved my life with Ash?</i> ’” (p. 52)
	““Even if your <i>life was threatened?</i> ” Disbelief colored my tone”. (p. 52)
The Girl On The Train	“I don’t want to speak to you, I don’t want to see you, I don’t want you anywhere near my family. <i>You can ruin your own life if you want to</i> , but you’re not ruining mine. Not any more”. (p. 11)
The Unexpected Consequences of Love	“The problem with other people <i>taking control of your life</i> and making things happen is that it might not actually be the best time for it to happen to you”. (p. 33)

When comprehending the concept of life in terms of a war, it implies that one individual on the verge of death must gather all of their might in order to endure or struggle to remain alive. Unfortunately, in a battle, there will always be winners and losers. Lucky people who have enough strong will may defeat their enemy—the illness—to gain back the life, while unlucky ones never win a fight in their life and receive painful results.

TABLE 10
MAPPING BETWEEN THE SOURCE *A WAR* AND THE TARGET *LIFE*

Novels	A WAR	LIFE
Wolf Hall	"Every man should be a <i>soldier once in his life</i> ". (p. 533)	Life is like a battlefield; every person living in the world is a brave and courageous soldier.
Wolf Hall	" <i>Her life was all duty</i> . She kept twelve paupers in her house at Woking and once she made me kneel down with a basin and wash their yellow feet, she's lucky I didn't throw upon them". (p. 562)	Life always has obligations that we have to take on and fulfill.
Life After Life	"They call it honky-tonk, I believe," Izzie said. A woman began to sing, raw and American. She sounded as if she had <i>spent her life in a prison cell</i> . 'Ida Cox,' Izzie said. 'She's a Negress. Isn't she extraordinary?'" (p. 103)	A life in captivity is seen as being imprisoned in a prison.
Oblivion	"Confusion marked her expression. 'You saved my life with Ash?'" (p. 52)	Life is sometimes saved before what's going on.
Oblivion	"Even if your <i>life was threatened?</i> ' Disbelief colored my tone". (p. 64)	Life in a deadlock is like falling into a chain of threatened dangers.

(e). *Life Is a Game*

There are moments of winning and losing and moments of ups and downs. Life is perceived differently by various individuals: for the wise, it's akin to a dream; for the foolish, it's a game; for the affluent, it's a comedy; and for the less fortunate, it's a tragedy. Hence, life can indeed be likened to a game. What truly matters is not whether one succeeds or fails, but rather staying present and relishing the experience of life's game.

TABLE 11
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING *LIFE IS A GAME*

Novels	Metaphorical examples
The Girl on the Train	"All those plans I had – photography courses and cookery classes – when it comes down to it, they feel a bit pointless, as if I'm <i>playing at real life</i> instead of actually living it". (p. 6)
Black Butterfly	"What strange game was this? Was he <i>bargaining for his life?</i> " (p. 8)
The Unexpected Consequences of Love	"Josh, having taken on <i>the biggest financial gamble of his life</i> , was rapidly running out of cash". (p. 3)
Me Before You	"But you just made me feel really crap. <i>If you were going to bet on my boring life</i> , did you have to make me aware of it?" (p. 60)

It really depends on the luck in order to decide whether your next move is going to lead you to the peak of success or bury you under the terrible black hole of your life. However, like a board game, every roll of the dice creates an opportunity to move. Therefore, people in life should kill fear and take action instead.

TABLE 12
MAPPING BETWEEN THE SOURCE *A GAME* AND THE TARGET *LIFE*

Novels	A GAME	LIFE
The Girl on the Train	"All those plans I had – photography courses and cookery classes – when it comes down to it, they feel a bit pointless, as if I'm <i>playing at real life</i> instead of actually living it". (p. 6)	Life is a game that can be played.
Black Butterfly	"What strange game was this? Was he <i>bargaining for his life?</i> " (p. 8)	Games can be wagered; lives can be negotiated.
The Unexpected Consequences of Love	"Everyone was growing disheartened, running out of enthusiasm for what felt like an insurmountable task. Josh, having taken on <i>the biggest financial gamble of his life</i> , was rapidly running out of cash". (p. 3)	Gambling is a life full of red and black, uncertainty, and betting.
Me Before You	"But you just made me feel really crap. <i>If you were going to bet on my boring life</i> , did you have to make me aware of it?" (p. 60)	Putting your life on the betting table is to decide the future.

B. *Ontological Metaphors of Life in the Selected British Novels*

Table 13 illustrates the frequency of ontological metaphors of life in nine selected British novels. Overall, it is evident that LIFE IS AN ENTITY is the most popular for all types of ontological metaphors of life, with 36.59%, while the percentages of LIFE IS A CONTAINER and LIFE IS A PERSON are similar (19.51%). LIFE IS A PERSONAL POSSESSION and LIFE IS A MACHINE are less popular at 14.63% and 9.76%, respectively.

TABLE 13
FREQUENCY OF ONTOLOGICAL METAPHORS OF LIFE IN SELECTED BRITISH NOVELS

No	Ontological metaphors of life	Number of metaphorical expressions	%
1	LIFE IS AN ENTITY	15	36.59
2	LIFE IS A CONTAINER	8	19.51
3	LIFE IS A PERSON	8	19.51
4	LIFE IS A PERSONAL POSSESSION	6	14.63
5	LIFE IS A MACHINE	4	9.76
Total		41	100

(a). *Life Is an Entity*

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), “Once we can identify our experiences as entities or substances, we can refer to them, categorize them, group them, and quantify them—and, by this means, reason about them” (p. 25). More specifically, conceptualizing life as an entity allows us to name and quantify it, pinpoint specific aspects of it, attribute causality to it, interact based on it, and possibly feel that we comprehend it. Let's examine a few instances illustrating this conceptual metaphor LIFE IS AN ENTITY in British novels.

TABLE 14
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING *LIFE IS AN ENTITY*

Novels	Metaphorical examples
Oblivion	“‘It’s <i>my life—our lives—you’re holding in your hands</i> ,’ I told her. I don’t expect you to care too much about tossing me under a speeding bus, but you’d also be tossing Dee under it”. (p. 55)
	“ <i>It is my life</i> . Dee swung her purse at me but missed. And you <i>took it from me</i> ”. (p. 63)
	“Not when <i>her life was in my hands</i> ”. (p. 88)
Half Broken Things	“Yeah, well. My mum had her own baby then, with my stepfather, my second stepfather. My Nan wouldn’t do it neither. She’s not that sort of Nan. <i>Got her own life to lead</i> ”. (p. 81)
Me Before You	“I have a <i>life</i> too, you know. It came out like a protest”. (p. 38)
	“You only <i>get one life</i> . It’s actually your duty to live it as fully as possible”. (p. 58)
	“‘I’m not talking about physically,’ she said. ‘I’m talking about learning to <i>embrace a new life</i> ’”. (p. 79)
Life After Life	“That would have been a <i>quite different life, perhaps a better one</i> ”. (p. 84)
	“He had grown rather remorseful over the clandestine nature of their relationship. She had brought a little excitement into what had become a <i>rather tedious life</i> , he said”. (p. 162)
Me Before You	“You probably wouldn’t look at me twice. An ordinary girl, leading an <i>ordinary life</i> . It actually suited me fine”. (p. 6)
	“I led a <i>big life</i> ”. (p. 97)

Hornby (2000) defines an entity as “something that exists separately from other things and has its own identity” (p. 419). As a result, entities can be categorized into several groups based on their unique characteristics. Similarly, the non-concrete concept of life is understood in terms of the more concrete one; an entity can be divided into different kinds, including a *quite different life, perhaps a better one, precious life, a rather tedious life, a normal social life, an ordinary life, a big life, a tiny life*, etc.

TABLE 15
MAPPING BETWEEN THE SOURCE AN ENTITY AND THE TARGET LIFE

Novels	AN ENTITY	LIFE
Oblivion	“‘It’s <i>my life—our lives—you’re holding in your hands</i> ,’ I told her. ‘I don’t expect you to care too much about tossing me under a speeding bus, but you’d also be tossing Dee under it’”. (p. 55)	Life is something that can be held in the palm of your hand.
Oblivion	“‘ <i>It is my life</i> .’ Dee swung her purse at me but missed. ‘And you <i>took it from me</i> ’”. (p. 63)	Life exists concretely, so it can be taken away.
Oblivion	“Not when <i>her life was in my hands</i> ”. (p. 88)	Life is a concrete thing, and can be held in the palm of hand.
Half Broken Things	“Yeah, well. My mum had her own baby then, with my stepfather, my second stepfather. My Nan wouldn’t do it neither. She’s not that sort of Nan. <i>Got her own life to lead</i> ”. (p. 81)	Life can be led and directed like a tangible thing.
Me Before You	“I have a <i>life</i> too, you know. It came out like a protest”. (p. 38)	
Me Before You	“You only <i>get one life</i> . It’s actually your duty to live it as fully as possible”. (p. 58)	
Me Before You	“‘I’m not talking about physically,’ she said. ‘I’m talking about learning to <i>embrace a new life</i> ’”. (p. 79)	Holding life tight is like a tangible physical object.
Life After Life	“That would have been a <i>quite different life, perhaps a better one</i> ”. (p. 84)	Life has a specific quality like a valuable tangible object.
Life After Life	“Eva would have been happier back in Munich, in the little bourgeois house that the Führer had bought for her, where she could lead a <i>normal social life</i> ”. (p. 222)	
Me Before You	“I led a <i>big life</i> ”. (p. 97)	

(b). *Life Is a Container*

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) point out that we perceive the outer world as existing outside of us because we are physical beings, separated from the outside world by the surface of our skins. We are all containers with an in-out orientation and a bounding surface. We project our own in-out orientation onto other surface-bounded physical things. It is considered to take some metaphorical expressions in typical British novels as excellent examples.

TABLE 16
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING *LIFE IS A CONTAINER*

Novels	Metaphorical examples
Life After Life	"And the baby <i>came back to life</i> . It was that simple". (p. 91)
	"Hugh had been there, he had held on to her hand and <i>kept her in this life</i> ". (p. 150)
Me Before You	"Inside the marquee huge fans had been kicked <i>into life</i> , whirring lazily over our heads". (p. 78)
	"Out at sea a storm had <i>exploded into life</i> ". (p. 95)
	"I don't want you to be tied to me, to my hospital appointments, to the restrictions <i>on my life</i> ". (p. 97)
Oblivion	"Though she had attended only two funerals <i>in her life</i> , she had learned through both experiences that observances like this were intended for the living, not the dead". (p. 19)

British people often understand the more abstract concept of life through the more physical concept of a container. Life is a container; it contains memories, love, friendship, sad stories, and fun in one's life, or it can be a failure or success. To sum up, the concept of life is comprehended as a concrete object used to hold or store everything inside it.

TABLE 17
MAPPING BETWEEN THE SOURCE *A CONTAINER* AND THE TARGET *LIFE*

Novels	A CONTAINER	LIFE
Life After Life	"And the baby <i>came back to life</i> . It was that simple". (p. 91)	Life has form, has shape, so can be placed on, in, or out of a container or other spatial surface. We can enter life, come to life, leave life, come back to life, stand above life, and stay below life because life is a concrete object that can contain other things.
Life After Life	"Hugh had been there, he had held on to her hand and <i>kept her in this life</i> ". (p. 150)	
Life After Life	"She fed the meter and the little Radiant popped <i>back into life</i> . She hadn't gassed herself after all then". (p. 285)	
Life After Life	"Hanne crossed her hands over her chest, looking like a rather constipated saint. ' <i>My life is fulfilled</i> ,' she laughed". (p. 206)	
Me Before You	"Inside the marquee huge fans had been kicked <i>into life</i> , whirring lazily over our heads". (p. 78)	
Me Before You	"Out at sea a storm had <i>exploded into life</i> ". (p. 95)	
Me Before You	"I don't want you to be tied to me, to my hospital appointments, to the restrictions <i>on my life</i> ". (p. 97)	
Oblivion	"Though she had attended only two funerals <i>in her life</i> , she had learned through both experiences that observances like this were intended for the living, not the dead". (p. 19)	

(c). *Life Is a Personal Possession*

When we think of life as an item, we can consider it to be "our possession". As a result, we are able to refer to life in language as either your life or mine. These kinds of situations are the less obvious examples of conceptual metaphors. However, these kinds of metaphorical expressions used to talk about life take up a huge number in comparison with others. It is common that people refer to life as their personal possession.

TABLE 18
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING *LIFE IS A PERSONAL POSSESSION*

Novels	Metaphorical examples
Life After Life	"The Führer took up so much room in <i>Eva's life</i> that when he wasn't here she was an empty vessel". (p. 221)
	"It reminded her of something but for <i>the life of her</i> she couldn't think what". (p. 242)
Oblivion	"Letting her fingertips trail over the numbers, she wondered what could have ended <i>the boy's life</i> at just seventeen". (p. 20)
	"If she hadn't intervened when she did, I don't know if I would've broken Baruck's hold. I owed her <i>my life</i> ". (p. 78)

His life, her life, my life, your life, their lives, the lives of people, and one's own life are common expressions in the British novels used as the main data source for this study. Each person's life is considered as a precious possession. It is evident that the concept of life can be seen through the perspective of another tangible idea: personal possession.

TABLE 19
MAPPING BETWEEN THE SOURCE *A PERSONAL POSSESSION* AND THE TARGET *LIFE*

Novels	A PERSONAL POSSESSION	LIFE
Life After Life	"The Führer took up so much room in <i>Eva's life</i> that when he wasn't here she was an empty vessel". (p. 221)	Life is a tangible, condensed material that can be owned, so it can belong to a person like him, her, mine, a guy, etc.
Life After Life	"It reminded her of something but for <i>the life of her</i> she couldn't think what". (p. 242)	
Life After Life	"'You're such a bright young woman,' Miss Woolf said. 'Don't waste <i>your life</i> , will you? If you're spared'". (p. 254)	
Life After Life	"This, Ursula thought, would remain the best moment of <i>her life</i> , no matter what else happened to her". (p. 306)	

(d). *Life Is a Person*

Personification is common in ordinary speech as well as literature. "This allows us to comprehend a wide variety of experiences with non-human entities in terms of human motivations, characteristics, and activities" (Lakoff & Johnson,

1980, p. 33). British novels contain a few metaphorical expressions that point to the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A PERSON.

TABLE 20
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING LIFE IS A PERSON

Novels	Metaphorical examples
Life After Life	“‘No point in thinking,’ she said briskly, ‘you just <i>have to get on with life</i> ’”. (p. 275)
Oblivion	“Not even draining the darkness from his dead world and replacing it with light and <i>life had been able to convince him that she’d returned for him yet again</i> ”. (p. 39)
Half Broken Things	“ <i>Life had become more modest</i> ; an air of quiet waiting descended, befitting a household that is observing a period of formal mourning”. (p. 235)
Me Before You	“ <i>My life had become strange and disconnected</i> from everyone I knew – Will’s plight and his secrets had swamped me”. (p. 86)
	“But it does define me, Clark. You don’t know me, not really. You never saw me before this thing. <i>I loved my life, Clark. Really loved it</i> ”. (p. 97)

Life can be understood in terms of human characteristics. Life can be someone that wants you to *remember, love, and get on with*. Life also has the personalities such as *modest, silly, complicated, strange, and disconnected*. Life is personalized and seen as a significantly important character in the relationship with other people in our society.

TABLE 21
MAPPING BETWEEN THE SOURCE A PERSON AND THE TARGET LIFE

Novels	A PERSON	LIFE
Life After Life	“‘I don’t want my job back,’ he said gruffly. ‘My days as some rich nob’s servant are over. <i>I miss the garden, not the life</i> . The garden was a thing of beauty’”. (p. 54)	The act of missing out on life is like not wanting to miss a person.
Life After Life	“‘If Bridget hadn’t taken it from her and said, ‘That’s a good suit, someone will be grateful for it,’ she might have crawled into the wardrobe and <i>given up on life</i> ’”. (p. 258)	Giving up life is like giving up someone.
Life After Life	“‘No point in thinking,’ she said briskly, ‘you just <i>have to get on with life</i> ’”. (p. 275)	Life needs to be treated well.
Oblivion	“Not even draining the darkness from his dead world and replacing it with light and <i>life had been able to convince him that she’d returned for him yet again</i> ”. (p. 39)	Life is a living individual that acts like a human, like persuading others.
Half Broken Things	“ <i>Life had become more modest</i> ; an air of quiet waiting descended, befitting a household that is observing a period of formal mourning”. (p. 235)	The personal quality of humility exists in life.
Me Before You	“ <i>My life had become strange and disconnected</i> from everyone I knew – Will’s plight and his secrets had swamped me”. (p. 86)	Life changes into a strange and separate from the surrounding.
Me Before You	“But it does define me, Clark. You don’t know me, not really. You never saw me before this thing. <i>I loved my life, Clark. Really loved it</i> ”. (p. 97)	A loved life is similar to a genuine person.

(e). *Life Is a Machine*

A machine is defined as "a piece of equipment with moving parts that is designed to do a particular job" (Lea & Bradbery, 2001, p. 770). The power used to work a machine can be electricity, steam, gas, etc. Some natural choices of words to mention about machines that can be found in daily conversations include *run, repair, remedy, mend, and fix*. These verbs are also used to convey the notion of life in British novels.

TABLE 22
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING LIFE IS A MACHINE

Novels	Metaphorical examples
Wolf Hall	“For a brief moment, lasting a minute or two, <i>he feels his life might mend</i> . But then he considers, how could he possibly ask Rafe to wait? Rafe needs to establish his own home”. (p. 126)
The Girl on the Train	“From the therapy sessions, I’ve learned that <i>the holes in your life are permanent. I’m starting to believe that there isn’t anything you can do to fix it</i> ”. (p. 24)
The Unexpected Consequences of Love	“‘You don’t understand. He’s my only sister’s only son. I need an assistant to help me <i>run my life</i> , and I’d rather employ Riley than some complete stranger’”. (p. 17)
Oblivion	“Dee smiled like she’d just <i>figured out the key to life</i> ”. (p. 81)

On the basis of prevalent metaphorical expressions highlighted above, it is concluded that the abstruse notion of life can be conceived in terms of the tangible thing, specifically the machine. To sum up, life can be naturally talked about with the use of machine expressions; in other words, the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A MACHINE exists in people’s perception, or it is obviously ordinary to comprehend the concept of life through the conventional expressions of machines.

TABLE 23
MAPPING BETWEEN THE SOURCE A MACHINE AND THE TARGET LIFE

Novels	A MACHINE	LIFE
Wolf Hall	“For a brief moment, lasting a minute or two, <i>he feels his life might mend</i> . But then he considers, how could he possibly ask Rafe to wait? Rafe needs to establish his own home”. (p. 126)	Mending is a verb used for machines, but life when it's wrong can be redone or adjusted.
The Girl on the Train	“From the therapy sessions, I've learned that <i>the holes in your life are permanent. I'm starting to believe that there isn't anything you can do to fix it</i> ”. (p. 24)	The hole is a mistake, failure leaves long-term consequences, difficult to overcome, when it exists in life, it is difficult to repair.
The Unexpected Consequences of Love	““You don't understand. He's my only sister's only son. I need an assistant to help me <i>run my life</i> , and I'd rather employ Riley than some complete stranger””. (p. 17)	Life is always fluctuating and changing, so it needs operating.
Oblivion	“Dee smiled like she'd just <i>figured out the key to life</i> ”. (p. 81)	In order for life to function properly, it is always necessary to find the important things.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study provide more evidence for a conceptual metaphor proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) that uses LIFE as the target domain. It is found that there are ten source domains used to convey life in British novels in the 21st century. It includes LIFE IS A JOURNEY, LIFE IS PASSING OF TIME, LIFE IS A STORY, LIFE IS A WAR, LIFE IS A GAME, LIFE IS AN ENTITY, LIFE IS A CONTAINER, LIFE IS A PERSONAL POSSESSION, LIFE IS A PERSON, and LIFE IS A MACHINE.

It is concluded that metaphors go beyond simple linguistic tools for imaginative expression. Essentially, this indicates that our cognitive processes naturally establish connections between different ideas. Hence, novels provide insights into how authors perceive and interconnect their own life experiences. Readers could see the story within the book from a different perspective by employing specific linguistic devices, such as metaphors. Particularly with conceptual metaphors, which are systematically connected to the everyday construction in our brains, they can develop entire narratives, characters, settings, and specific meanings. Language changes from literal to figurative depending on how we see concepts in our everyday knowledge. The construction of a situated meaning goes beyond the mere application of rhetorical strategy, effects, and language decoration in the book. The notion of conceptual metaphor has demonstrated that any information contained in the novel can be deciphered.

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