

# Fostering Student Metaphorical Thinking in EFL Reading Classes Through the Method of Constructing a Text Associative-Semantic Field

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The present study explores the importance of developing metaphorical thinking skills in students within the framework of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading courses at the tertiary educational level. Metaphorical thinking is viewed as the ability to envisage the world figuratively, perceive associatively, and express oneself creatively. It is crucial to recognize metaphors in texts, interpret the complex images they evoke, and generate new metaphors. It is especially needful in the current era of clip thinking and fragmented information processing when students often approach content superficially rather than comprehensively, leading to decreased cognitive activity and a diminished capacity to understand literature. To foster metaphorical thinking, the paper suggests building a text associative-semantic field focusing on metaphors. Due to its hierarchical structure, which can be envisioned as a dense nucleus surrounded by a central region of synonyms and further enveloped by a periphery of more loosely associated linguistic units, the text associative-semantic field is seen as a potent solution for facilitating improved visualization and more holistic comprehension of information, allowing students for expanding their vocabulary and strengthening associative connections. Notably, the study highlights analyzing the metaphors of emotional states as they contribute significantly to a more profound interpretation of the text, understanding the writer's unique style, deepening the students' engagement with the book, and expanding their emotional experiences.

*Keywords:* EFL reading, fiction, clip thinking, metaphor, metaphorical thinking, emotion, fear, text associative- semantic field

An inkwell stares at me with one black eye, with a glint in its pupil. A clock whose hands are at ten to two brings to mind a face with Wilhelm's whiskers. Between the rounded bell-glass of a lamp and the bald head of a philosopher filled with luminous thought, there is a soothing resemblance.

—Vladimir Nabokov, *The Creative Writer*

## Introduction

Reading is crucial in acquiring knowledge about the world, developing man's intellect, and enriching his life with emotions and feelings. When learning a foreign language, reading helps people master the language by expanding their vocabulary, enhancing their comprehension of grammatical and lexical structures, and improving their writing and speaking skills. Reading foreign fiction, in particular, on the one hand, provides an opportunity for students to get acquainted with the cultural specifics, values, worldviews, and mentality of native speakers,

and on the other hand, allows them to discover universal themes and points of contact between all cultures and languages. In addition, it promotes emotional involvement in the atmosphere of the language environment, which plays a vital role in motivation when studying a foreign language. However, to productively read fiction texts and deeply understand the author's intention, recognize the artistic means that help realize this intention, and decipher one's attitude to what has been read requires significant mental effort, self-determination, and responsible commitment to intellectual and moral obligations, which not many are ready or capable of making. Therefore, interest in reading and students' ability to seek and comprehend the depth of what they read decrease.

One significant cause of reduced understanding of literary art has its roots in the fall of the "faculty of attention" from the human mind and its replacement with journalism, newspapers, and picture magazines already observed at the beginning of the 20th century (Lubbock, 1920, p. 277). Given that the main characteristics of this type of reading source are brevity, simplification, avoidance of abstract ideas, emphasis and veneration for facts, reduced paragraphs, focus on the efficiency and catchiness of the information, and the compartmentalization of life in newspaper columns (Fadiman, 1949, p. 21), it becomes apparent how deeply this fragmentary description of actions, moods, and images, grasping only short moments and not leaving enough trace in memory and heart, has affected the reader's perception of information. Namely, reading has become more about attraction than involvement, and the word—subservient to the image. The problem was further aggravated by "a gradual destruction of the overall ability of willpower in people" aimed at grasping complex truths and solving challenging tasks (Averintsev, 1988, p. 2). It led to weakened and "sliding" perception, inertia, inaccuracy of thinking, and inability and unwillingness to comprehend educational tasks over an extended period (Shamrei & Tikhonova, 2015, p. 3).

Another contributing factor to a lowered reading comprehension ability was the rapid development of technology. The research findings show that the emergence of modern technogenic civilization caused a shift away from universally accepted concepts such as beauty, the sublime, spirituality, and the expression of inexpressible imagery to new principles characterized by themes of discontinuity, fragmentation, disharmony, simulacra, non-hierarchy, and materiality (Mankovskaya & Bychkov, 2011, p. 124). This shift has led to more changes in how people grasp information and even think altogether, further intensifying a state of mind in which the world is perceived as a kaleidoscope of disparate facts, and the integrity of the perception of the completeness and detail of the mutual nesting of processes in the universe is violated (Petrov, 2008, p. 104). Such violation of the integrity of worldview and process-figurative thinking additionally provoked the replacement of traditional, conceptual thinking characterized by seeing the bigger picture, making connections, analyzing patterns and interrelations, and being able to solve problems and make generalizations with a new type of thinking known as "clip thinking", which encourages a simplified, fragmented, and superficial perception of information. As a result, man started to lose an overall feeling of integrity and knowledge of life, becoming dependent on detailed instructions on how to live (Pomerants, 2002).

Profound research over the past few decades in the field of education and language teaching, in particular, has shown that students with predominant clip thinking exhibit characteristics such as a solid short-term memory, difficulty concentrating, lack of perseverance, reduced criticality of thinking, impatience, a tendency to interrupt others, heightened sensitivity to external stimuli, chaotic behavior, quick switching between tasks, superficial thinking, and a minimalistic approach to assignments (Makarowska, 2016). Moreover, they tend to have so-called *digital amnesia*, or a tendency to memorize less and heavily rely on finding necessary information online. With

regard to reading, many students with clip thinking who attempt to read fiction tend to think in bright but disconnected images, missing out on the subtleties and hidden meanings in the text, which leads to what A. S. Pushkin wrote in Eugene Onegin: “The books were on the shelf arrayed,/He read and read, but all in vain”. As a result, their reading style also becomes clip and discontinuous. In this regard, researchers are concerned that soon readers will treat books not primarily as a source of content, but more like tools or experiments. In other words, they will approach books like “a buffet”, picking and choosing only the parts they find appealing or useful, rather than engaging with the material as a whole (Mankovskaya & Bychkov, 2011, p. 96).

Consequently, it is important to create conditions in lessons that encourage thoughtful and conscious reading and stimulate students’ motivation. In this sense, what can be done today is to try to adapt to the realities of the modern world with its rapidly developing technologies and apply them in the educational process, namely, to engage the positive features of clip thinking (thrill, fast reaction speed, associativity, desire to show creativity, preference for active forms of work, and focus on visual perception of information (Semenovskikh, 2014)) and to do everything possible so that understanding of each symbol and each method of analysis can be “rewarded with a joyful discovery of meaning and gradually transformed into a habit that does not complicate reading but helps comprehend one’s life” (Lisovitskaya, 2003, p. 65). To discover such “joyful meaning” and the maximum meaning potential of literature, it is necessary to teach students to engage in active dialogue and co-creation with the author, in which they can approach “the level of the author’s worldview, ‘get infected’ with his thoughts and feelings, and understand his vision of the world and man” (Domanski, 1998, p. 91). With such communication between the reader and the author, the text will begin to “live, intonate, acquire different sounds, new meanings, and associations”, and the previously “dormant” words, concepts, and images will become awakened (Domanski, 1998, p. 91). The latter are of particular interest and importance in literature because they demonstrate authors’ ability for integral perception and portray the sensational and emotional experience within the text using vivid descriptions that appeal to readers’ senses and thoughts. Deciphering images allows for understanding the depth and multilayeredness of the work of art and its symbolic subtexts. It is, therefore, crucial to teach students to discover and interpret the images the author hides in the text so that they can create their own later. In this regard, metaphors can serve as one of the richest sources of such images.

### **The Nature of Metaphor and Its Role in the Learning Process**

Within cognitive linguistics, metaphor is characterized as one of the leading mental operations or a way of learning, structuring, and explaining the environment. It is generally defined as a comparison that likens two different things by identifying one as the other. In this sense, some other literary devices and means of expression can be referred to as metaphors. For example, an epithet can be viewed as a metaphorical definition; an allegory as a type of imagery, the basis of which is a parable or the imprinting of an imaginative idea in an object image; a symbol—as a universal aesthetic category, revealed through comparison with adjacent categories—artistic imagery on the one hand, and sign and allegory—on the other (Kozhevnikova & Nikolaeva, 1987). The metaphor can also be equated to personification, objectification, simile, conceit, analogy, and metonymy (Borshchevskaya, 2021, p. 11; Drury, 2006, p. 168). Therefore, considering a metaphor only from the point of view that it is a transfer of a name from one object to another based on their similarities does not reveal its whole essence because the unity of objects is not so much created by logical thought but by “a sense of evaluative activity” which makes the connections not just objective, but also subjective, requiring “the subjective unity of the sentient and willing

person” (Bakhtin, 2003, p. 301). In other words, a metaphor shows signs of both the formation of a picture of the world and the manifestation of an individual author’s beginning. The proof of this is a plethora of brilliant metaphors that authors constantly create:

(1) *Having squeezed the final drop of sweetness from it, Fyodor stretched and got up from his couch. He felt very hungry. The hands of his watch had lately begun **to misbehave**, now and then starting to move counterclockwise, so that he could not depend on them; to judge by the light, however, the day, about **to leave on a journey, had sat down** with its family **for a pensive pause** (V. Nabokov, *The Gift*).*

(2) *When they **grew tired of waiting**, the dinner smells **climbed off** the curtains and **drifted** through the Sea Queen windows **to dance the night away** on the dinner-smelling sea (A. Roy, *God of Small Things*).*

(3) *A dense grey **wall of mist**, covering almost half the horizon, was advancing towards them over the sea in the form of **two broad, converging tongues**. It was approaching visibly, swirling mightily over the black surface of the waters, gradually filling all the surrounding space (Ch. Aitmatov, *Spotted Dog Running at the Edge of the Sea*).*

The above metaphors impress and imprint into memory as they create amazing images. Such an ability of a metaphor to evoke vivid images and a precise and powerful sense of what they describe is explained by the fact that there are various associations or attributes at the bottom of most metaphors (Jaynes, 1976, p. 56), which once again indicates that it is not just a comparison of two objects, but the author’s ability to contemplate and holistically perceive the world, to notice the little things and the hidden and unseen links between different objects, and to look into their essence from a different angle:

In other words, the creative process consists as it were of two stages: a complete dislocation or dissociation of things, and their association in terms of a new harmony. The first stage presupposes the capacity of the artist to make any object depart from its traditional series,—seeing for instance a mailbox utterly apart from the idea of posting letters, or the face of a person one knows in a new way quite unrelated to one’s knowledge of him. (Nabokov, 2019, p. 267)

Such an integrated vision of the world, coupled with the consideration that language is not simply a means of communication but “an organ of perception” and “the rampant restless sea of metaphor” (Jaynes, 1976, p. 51), enables the creation of unique metaphors and helps avoid excessive rationalization that focuses solely on the intellect and explanation rather than intuition and feeling (Zhgun, 2024). In this regard, dwelling separately on metaphors that convey emotions is significant because emotions link the unconscious and consciousness and activate imagination and intuition, without which it is impossible to realize any creative process (Borshchevskaya, 2013). In general, emotions are considered subjective reactions to inner or outer stimuli. So, on the one hand, they represent an individual’s inner experience that appears and manifests itself in determining situations. On the other hand, they are directed outward to demonstrate evaluative action and impact on the actualization environment (Zhgun, 2022). This complex nature of the phenomenon is undoubtedly reflected in the language of fiction, where authors “gracefully and wittily tell their readers about emotions that either burn and thrill or glow in a mellow light of their memories”, thus enriching their own memories and enabling them to relive through their own “half-understood moments of enjoyment or suffering” (Greenlaw & Stratton, 1929, p. 525). Moreover, reading and focusing on the metaphoric imagery of emotions helps students better understand why people experience certain emotions and their impact on their bodies and minds. Here are a few examples.

(4) *Then the **gates of his heart** were flung open, and **his joy flew** far over the sea. And he closed his eyes and prayed in the silences of his soul (K. Gibran, *The Prophet*).*

(5) *He folded his fear into a perfect rose. He held it out in the palm of his hand. She took it from him and put it in her hair* (A. Roy, *God of Small Things*).

(6) *Joy flared up like fire within him. He picked up a stone. The smashed glass tinkled on the floor. A moment later he was inside the room* (A. Huxley, *Brave New World*).

(7) *At that moment, when the world around him melted away, when he stood alone like a star in the heavens, he was overwhelmed by a feeling of an icy despair, he was more firmly himself than ever* (H. Hesse, *Siddhartha*).

(8) *“Yes, it is indeed a happy day, a red-letter day,” said M’sieur Pierre. “I’m bubbling over with excitement myself...”* (V. Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*).

All the above examples confirm that metaphors are a common technique for creating imagery in general and conveying emotions in particular. However, as practice shows, the modern methodology of teaching literature “smoothly goes around this functional aspect of the trope, paying much more attention to the technological aspect of the teaching process and ignoring the nature of the taught subject” (Borshchevskaya, 2021, p. 7). If metaphors are found in educational materials, their meaning is either not explained at all or is explained in a simplified form (Koch, 2013). One of the reasons for such avoidance is the lack of teaching and methodological materials for educators that could explain how to work with basic metaphorical programs and demonstrate methods and learning techniques using this literary device (Köpke, 2018). Therefore, more research should be conducted to include the metaphorical analysis in the act of reading. After students master the process of recognizing metaphor and understanding the mechanisms of its creation and functioning, they will be able to interpret much more of what is spoken and written in a foreign language and eventually compose new metaphors, increasingly revealing the potential of words and context in which they can be used. In addition, they will be able to create original associations. Here, it is worth noting that identifying and building associative relationships is one of the most important types of work in foreign language reading, as it contributes to expanding and better memorization of the vocabulary, enriching their learning and emotional experience, and developing students’ metaphorical thinking—the ability for the figurative vision of the world, associative perception, and creative self-expression. In this regard, an effective and promising way of analyzing literary texts is to identify and construct their text associative-semantic fields.

### Understanding the Text Associative-Semantic Field and Its Potential

The text associative-semantic field (TASF) is defined as a collection of significant linguistic units in a particular text or a group of texts connected by at least one common semantic component, whether it be of a lingua-semantic or associative nature (Lisovitskaya, 2003, p. 65). In other words, the TASF has a dual nature: It reflects not only the broader and commonly accepted societal norms of language but also personal associations that arise from individual experiences.

The structure of the TASF can be visualized as a hierarchical model. At its core is a dense nucleus containing a lexical unit that represents the most general meaning for all related units. Surrounding this nucleus is a central region of synonyms and related terms, followed by a periphery of loosely connected linguistic units. This peripheral region contains terms that may not closely relate to the nucleus in meaning but may evoke similar associations based on context. Notably, the TASF can encompass units from any linguistic level that acquire unique semantic features in a text, including the author’s individual thesaurus, trope meanings, grammatical and syntactic implications, traditional symbols, and intertextual connections, as well as aspects like frequency and placement of repetitions (Lisovitskaya, 2015, pp. 161-162). Crucially, the TASF is dynamic: It unfolds in a

“linear and shuttle manner” as readers engage with the text, allowing for adjustments in interpretation that can justify or challenge their emerging expectations, thereby evoking new associations (Lisovitskaya, 2015, pp. 161-162).

By immersing students in constructing and exploring the TASF, educators can create a rich, reflective learning environment that enhances language proficiency and prepares students for nuanced language use because it allows for seeing the interrelations of language, thought, and emotion within the realm of fiction. Let us provide an in-depth analysis of metaphors conveying emotional states in English fiction and demonstrate how the methodology of constructing an associative-semantic field can be applied in the classroom. Due to the limited volume of the paper, only metaphors of fear are investigated.

### **In-depth Analysis of Fear Metaphors in Fiction and the Construction of the Emotion TASF**

Fear is generally accepted as a universal primary emotion, i.e., it manifests itself in all representatives of humanity (except for individual cases and deviations) in the form of stereotypical and instinctive behavior. Because fear is written in genetic memory and directly related to survival, it protects and preserves the human population and mobilizes it to action. The problem of fear has always occupied people’s minds, but in different eras, the view of emotion changed. To illustrate, in antiquity, there was mainly fear of fate and death: in the Middle Ages—of guilt and curse; and in the New Age—of the emptiness and meaninglessness of life. All this was directly reflected in the language, and the phenomenon of fear was repeatedly described in world literature, with its representation varying widely depending on the genre. For instance, very often in literary texts, the everyday perception and feeling of fear are linguistically conveyed by such descriptions as when a person turns to stone, freezes, goes numb, turns pale, shakes, shudders, trembles, experiences an unpleasant cold, or goosebumps. In this sense, a parallel can be drawn with the physiological description of fear when the experience of fear is accompanied by a decrease in muscle tone, heart rate, blood pressure, dilation of the pupils, sweating, or a rush of blood to the limbs (Izard, 1980). On the other hand, fear can have a substantial impact on the psychological state of an individual. In this case, it influences his perception (it gets limited and clouded), behavior (it becomes uncontrollable), and thinking (when insecurity or a premonition of danger appears). Undoubtedly, this also finds its linguistic representation in literature. In this regard, it should be emphasized that works of art with the theme of fear in analytical and foreign language reading lessons are particularly fascinating to students. In one respect, the attractiveness of fear is confirmed by the love of young people for scary stories and tales:

When it comes to the emotion cluster “fear”, readers can place themselves beside the victim, sensing his peril, holding their breath when it seems impossible for them to escape, feeling keen relief as he survives because of good luck, quick thinking, unfaltering courage or strong spirit. (Greenlaw & Stratton, 1929, p. 494)

On the other, artwork that actively explores different types of fear captures the attention of students due to its rich language of emotional description, and diverse manifestation of fear types (fear of the past, fear of retaliation for sins committed, fear of the supernatural, of illness, of death, imaginary fear, and fear of madness) and its shades, or overtones that become determinable with a more in-depth analysis and considerable contextual extension (see Zhgun, 2023b). As confirmation, let us provide several examples.

(9) *In a distant part of the grove, from behind the graveyard church, there was a sudden glimpse of something, and it rushed at me in a dark ball at a furious pace—beside myself, I staggered aside, **my entire head***

*immediately turned to ice and tightened up, my heart gave a leap and froze. What was it? It rushed by and disappeared. But still my heart remained standing still in my breast. And thus, with my heart stopped, carrying it within me like a burdensome chalice, I moved on* (I. Bunin, *A Late Hour*).

Here, the description of the physiological manifestations of fear (coldness in the head, the quickened pulse) and the metaphor of a frozen heart powerfully convey the psychological condition the main character experiences in the moment of dread.

(10) *Nevertheless, every time anyone came into the station, or a carriage drew up at the door, the heart of the young man with the blue spectacles became inflated like a balloon, his knees trembled, his bag almost fell from his hands, and his glasses off his nose, where, we may mention in passing, they were seated crookedly* (P. Merimee, *The Blue Room*).

In this depiction, the author also uses the metaphor of a heart that evokes intense anxiety and reveals how fear can make moments of anticipation particularly poignant. In this sense, such an impact of fear can be explained by the fact that human fear has enormous potential—as soon as a person hears about a danger, no matter how distant it may be, he often perceives it as a threat to himself and begins to construct countless imaginary threats (Svendsen, 2008, p. 29).

(11) *She was so afraid of seeing him that her stomach was in knots and she thought she was going to be sick* (M. Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*).

This example conveys a deep fear of vulnerability that accompanies the couple's relationship. The physical sensation of the emotion (knots in the stomach) becomes intertwined with the psyche's wariness of potential emotional pain.

All three excerpts describe the so-called *empirical fear*. It is believed that the trigger for such fear is a particular object or circumstance (Kierkegaard, 2005). However, a deeper look at its nature shows that empirical fear exists only in itself, and people experiencing it are mostly afraid not of the object or situation itself but of their consequences. Now, let us give examples of verbalizing fear and fear metaphors of a slightly different nature.

(12) *You say, commandant, that you were afraid. I beg to disagree with you. You are in error as to the meaning of the word and the nature of the sensation that you experienced. An energetic man is never afraid in the presence of urgent danger. He is excited, aroused, full of anxiety, but fear is something quite different. [...] Permit me to explain. Fear—and the boldest men may feel fear—is something horrible, an atrocious sensation, a sort of decomposition of the soul, a terrible spasm of brain and heart, the very memory of which brings a shudder of anguish, but when one is brave he feels it neither under fire nor in the presence of sure death nor in the face of any well-known danger. It springs up under certain abnormal conditions, under certain mysterious influences in the presence of vague peril. Real fear is a sort of reminiscence of fantastic terror of the past. A man who believes in ghosts and imagines he sees a specter in the darkness must feel fear in all its horror* (G. Maupassant, *Fear*).

In the passage above, fear is conveyed by the metaphors “a decomposition of the soul” and “a terrible spasm of the brain and heart”, implying that the emotion can be a profound and highly damaging experience. By mentioning that fear arises from “abnormal conditions” and is tied to the past (“reminiscence of fantastic terror”), the main character demonstrates that fear can be triggered by internal and irrational thoughts rather than immediate external threats, linking it to the unknown.

(13) *And little by little I was overcome by an unpleasant feeling. At first I thought that this was vexation at not being able to explain a simple phenomenon; but afterwards, when I suddenly turned away from the light in*

horror and caught hold of Pashka with one hand, it became clear that I was **overcome with** terror... I was **seized with** a feeling of loneliness, misery, and horror, as though I had been **flung down against my will into this great hole full of shadows**, where I was standing all alone with the belfry looking at me with its red eye (A. Chekhov, *Panic Fears*).

In this passage, the narrator goes through an unsettling feeling that turns into a sense of terror. The imagery of being “flung down against one’s will into this great hole full of shadows” introduces the idea of being overwhelmed by fear and darkness, symbolizing confinement and helplessness and demonstrating deep and existential fear.

(14) *Another thing: at night, in bed, I would abruptly remember that I was mortal. What then took place within my mind was much the same as happens in a huge theater if the lights suddenly go out, and someone shrilly screams in the swift-winged darkness, and other voices join in, resulting in a blind tempest, with the **black thunder of panic growing**—until suddenly the lights come on again, and the performance of the play is blandly resumed. Thus would my **soul choke for** a moment while, lying supine, eyes wide open, I tried with all my might to **conquer fear**, rationalize death, come to terms with it on a day-by-day basis, without appealing to any creed or philosophy* (V. Nabokov, *Terror*).

Here, the author employs theatrical metaphors to convey the experience of confronting mortality and the sudden onset of panic. The comparison to a theater where darkness falls and chaos ensues encapsulates the abruptness with which fear can invade one’s consciousness.

Overall, all three examples reveal a different side of fear—fear as a multi-faceted emotion that combines elements of anxiety, isolation, and existential crisis. Moreover, they illustrate that fear can emerge from internal reflections or incomprehensible circumstances. To put it another way, the excerpts illustrate a distinctly different kind of fear—objectless, incomprehensible, and irrational; a fear that fundamentally alters one’s worldview and consciousness. This form of fear is often referred to as metaphysical (Kierkegaard, 2005). It is suggested that the origins of such fear lie not in the external world or objective reality but rather beyond it; consequently, this emotion is not readily perceivable or explicable. In essence, metaphysical fear is the dread of *Nothingness*—a fear that manifests when the world that once provided stability vanishes, leaving one bereft of all connections and confronted with a void of meaninglessness and despair (Heidegger, 1995). This fear is not directed at any specific entity; rather, it embodies a profound anxiety stemming from the absence of meaning and purpose.

In the examples of both empirical and metaphysical fear, the authors manage to convey this emotion through a detailed description of the physiological manifestations that arise with fear through tropes and figures of speech, a description of the general atmosphere and mental states of the characters, symbolism, and visual and sound signs. A unique color is undoubtedly created due to metaphors and the images they evoke. Despite the abundance of fear metaphors, they can be narrowed down to the following classification: Fear as a fluid is a container, fear is a hidden enemy, fear is a tormentor, fear is a supernatural being, fear is a disease, fear is insanity, fear is an opponent in a struggle, fear is a burden, fear is a natural force, and fear is a social superior (Kövecses, 2000, p. 23). Let us analyze some of them in more detail.

(15) *Miss Piggy appears to be less conflicted than the judge, but from Jodi’s point of view she’s a greater challenge. Her **anxiety flows beneath the surface in underground streams, rarely bubbling up or creating a disturbance**. Tapping into it and bringing it into her field of awareness is not going to be easy* (A. S. A. Harrison, *The Silent Wife*).

In the abstract, the metaphor of anxiety flowing beneath the surface as “underground streams” suggests that

the emotion, while it may not manifest itself overtly, has the potential to disrupt the human mind significantly. In other words, the imagery highlights how fear can be insidious, waiting quietly until it finds an outlet and erupts.

(16) *It makes me ashamed to be afraid, but I am desperately afraid—**fear**, never halting, **rushes through me with an ominous roar, like a torrent**, and my body vibrates like a bridge over a waterfall, and one has to speak very loud to hear oneself above the Roar* (V. Nabokov, *The Gift*).

In this striking excerpt, the description of fear as a “torrent” that creates vibration within the body paints a bright picture of how deeply the emotion can resonate. Here, fear transforms into a symphony of loud sounds, conveying the chaos that can come from within.

(17) *The doctor sucked in on his pipe, blew a plume of smoke toward the rows of medical books. Trexler’s gaze followed the smoke. He managed to make out one of the titles, “The Genito-Urinary System”. **A bright wave of fear swept** cleanly over him, and he winced under the first pain of kidney stones. He remembered when he was a child, the first time he ever entered a doctor’s office, sneaking a look at the titles of the books—and the **flush of fear**, the shirt wet under the arms, the book on t.b., the sudden knowledge that he was in the advanced stages of consumption, the quick vision of the hemorrhage* (E. B. White, *The Second Tree From the Corner*).

In the passage, fear is also metaphorically represented through water elements that convey the character’s emotional state and his underlying anxieties about health and mortality, evoking rich imagery. First, the metaphor “a bright wave of fear” suggests that fear can be expansive and immersive and, like a wave, wash over and overwhelm. The adjective “bright”, in this case, implies not something positive and illuminating but rather something piercingly clear and acute. The wave metaphor also implies that fear is not static. The second metaphor—“the flush of fear”—conveys fear’s intense and transient nature. Additionally, it illustrates how fear can suddenly invade a man’s consciousness, leaving him vulnerable and incapable of control in moments of severe anxiety. Overall, the metaphors of fear in this passage intricately weave together physical sensations, memories, and existential concerns, painting a picture of how fear is deeply rooted in personal experience and shaped by one’s relationship with health and vulnerability.

So, in all examples, fear is conveyed through metaphors that evoke associations of emotion with liquid, namely, with flow and stream (*streams, torrent, wave*). Contextually, the image is reinforced by vocabulary with the semantics of water (*flows, rushes, a waterfall*) that implies the all-consuming nature of fear. More specifically, fear can be pervasive, slowly and imperceptibly seeping into the human mind like a creek, or can emerge unexpectedly, overwhelming like a flood or tsunami. Now, let us move on to another group of fear metaphors.

(18) *A **shiver** ran down his spine. Suddenly now he felt the cold. But it wasn’t the air that was cold: the **cold came from inside. It sat deep in his heart**, and it was **horror*** (R. Seethaler, *A Whole Life*).

Here, the metaphor of a shiver running down a spine suggests that the experience of fear can transcend mere mental and emotional state—it can invade the very essence of one’s being and go as deep as the heart. The cold that it creates metaphorically illustrates how fear can chill to the bone and imbue a person with a horrific sense of dread. In fact, the metaphor of fear as “chill” is a powerful and widespread device that conveys the physiological response to the emotion:

(19) *Siddhartha stood still and for a moment **an icy chill stole over him**. He shivered inwardly like a small animal, like a bird or hare, when he realized how alone he was* (H. Hesse, *Siddhartha*).

(20) *She recalled how Jackie had popped out from under the table and started nodding his head with an eerie tenderness. It seemed to her that all the objects in the room were watching her expectantly. She was **chilled***

*by a wind of fear* (V. Nabokov, *Revenge*).

In both passages, fear is metaphorically expressed as a chill, creating a vivid emotional response. In the first text, the character experiences “an icy chill” that reflects his deep sense of loneliness and existential dread. The comparison to a small animal adds to his feeling of vulnerability and helplessness. In the second text, the chill is associated with “a wind of fear”, evoking a sense of being enveloped by something external. The “chill” here underlines the suffocating presence of fear, whereas the imagery of objects in the room “watching” the woman adds to her feeling of paranoia and high sensitivity to the surroundings.

(21) *In spite of the sweat pouring out of her, a chill wind is rippling through her bloodstream. She alternates between huddling under the bedclothes and heaving them aside, until at last she is forced out of bed by the dog’s breath on her face and the little yips he gives when he needs attention* (A. S. A. Harrison, *The Silent Wife*).

This example also brings the concept of coldness to the forefront. However, the imagery of “sweat pouring out of her” juxtaposed against a “chill wind rippling through her bloodstream” contrasts internal turmoil and external sensations. This implies the dual nature of fear, or its push and pull. The same image and associations of fear with cold arise in the examples below:

(22) *An ice-frog jumped in my chest. I thought of the tenement and the dark halls and nice Mrs. Gutierrez and lovely Fannie* (R. Bradbury, *Death Is a Lonely Business*).

(23) *A cold moth with unusually dense dorsal tufts landed lightly on Rahel’s heart. Where its icy legs touched her, she got goosebumps. Six goosebumps on her careless heart. A little less her Ammu loved her* (A. Roy, *God of Small Things*).

Here, fear is not named but implied, and its “cold” essence and impact on the recipient are conveyed through individual author’s associations and the image of a frog and a moth accordingly. More specifically, a frog usually carries significant spiritual symbolism and means renewal, resurrection, progress, vitality, good luck, fertility, and prosperity (Cirlot, 2001, pp. 114-115). However, the passage brings negative connotations to the original positive idea of the image and is associated with fear based on its cold skin and cold-blooded nature. As for the moth, it normally symbolizes hope for new positive changes, salvation, freedom, harmony, light, and warmth in different cultures. In ancient Greece, for example, it was a symbol of beauty, grace, and lightness, and it served as one of the forms of Psyche—a goddess of the soul. In poetry, the insect is often used with the following epithets: soundless, fragile, tender, light, fluttering, or white-winged. Nevertheless, in the passage, the moth evokes quite the opposite associations (*cold, icy, and goosebumps*), which implies the loss of hope and despair caused by the girl’s fear that her mother would love her less because of her reckless words. Such a metaphorical description of fear helps the reader penetrate the depths of the character’s consciousness and understand his/her psychological state and worldview. Overall, Examples 18-23 reveal such qualities of fear as its icy and paralyzing grip, chilling sensation, and shivering desolation. The analysis of other illustrations shows that among other widespread images and associations that metaphors of fear create in fiction are fog and opaqueness:

(24) *One of the watchers forgot himself, began to applaud, and suddenly backed away, eyes cloudy with terror* (S. King, *The Dark Tower*).

(25) *He could hear, through the curtain of his own terror, Jake’s pattering feet as the boy ran* (S. King, *The Dark Tower*).

(26) *Allie felt her numb and feelingless feet propelling her backward. She struck the mirror, making it shiver, and blind panic took over. She bolted like a steer* (S. King, *The Dark Tower*).

In the passages provided by Stephen King’s *The Dark Tower*, fear is metaphorically depicted as a fog

obscuring clarity. In the first example, the imagery of cloudy eyes suggests that fear can cloud judgment and make it hard for the watcher to see clearly and rationally. The second sentence highlights the protagonist's fight against his own fear. The metaphor "the curtain of fear" implies that fear can act like a veil or fog that limits awareness. In the third case, the woman's feeling of "blind panic" also refers to the fog metaphor, stressing how fear can engulf a person and make him act without clarity.

(27) *On the way down from the Klufterspitze the couple's anxiety and despair had quickly dissipated, and when the first rays of sun warmed their faces, their tiredness too suddenly seemed to disappear* (R. Seethaler, *A Whole Life*).

In this context, the metaphor "anxiety and despair had quickly dissipated" suggests that these negative emotions act like a cloud of fog that gradually lifts and allows clarity to return. The metaphor "dissipated" also conveys an emotional sense that fades away with the sun's arrival. Collectively, all four passages highlight how fear can interfere with accurate perception, obscuring clarity and making the path forward seem treacherous. In other words, metaphors used in excerpts lend insight into how fear can cloud judgment, distort perception, and isolate individuals.

Another typical imagery of metaphors conveying fear is that of fetters and slavery:

(28) *She was panting now, and in her face was a terror which was inexplicable. I do not know what she thought. I felt that she was possessed by some shapeless dread which robbed her of all self-control. As a rule she was so calm; her agitation now was amazing. Stroeve looked at her for a while with puzzled consternation* (W. S. Maugham, *The Moon and Sixpence*).

The excerpt captures a moment of intense emotional distress or, rather, an emotional climax. Mentioning the inexplicable terror that possessed the woman implies the fact that that deep, primal fear surpassed rational understanding and led to an alarming change in her behavior and a severe psychological breakdown.

(29) *He knew that she would be alarmed, and that she would reply, and he hoped that, when the fear of losing him clutched at her heart, it would force from her words such as he had never yet heard her utter; and indeed, it was by this device that he had won from her the most affectionate letters she had so far written him* (M. Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*).

Here, the metaphor conveying a "possessive" nature of fear ("fear of losing him clutched at her heart") implies a deep sense of ownership, control, and emotional connection. It becomes clear from the passage that the protagonist is aware of his emotional possession over the woman's feelings and knows how to manipulate emotions to gain her affection and make her afraid.

(30) *There was a moment when he was almost conscious of death, and was ready to meet it as a welcome guest; his sensations were so overstrained, his passion surged up with such violence on waking, such ecstasy took possession of his soul that life, quickened by its intensity, seemed on the point of breaking, of being shattered, of flickering out in one minute and being quenched forever. Almost at that instant, as though in answer to his anguish, in answer to his quivering heart, the familiar mellow, silvery voice of Katerina rang out – like that inner music known to man's soul in hours of joy, in hours of tranquil happiness* (F. Dostoyevsky, *The Landlady*).

In the final example, the metaphor "took possession of his soul" extends the idea of possession and slavery to one's state of being—his feelings possess him to the extent that he feels on the brink of losing his life. In other words, the metaphor implies that profound fear can impose a sense of ownership that profoundly affects an individual.

All the passages accurately show how the characters' state of mind changes, what images arise in their

imagination, consciousness, and memory when they experience fear, and what verbal instruments help convey this emotional state. The analysis of linguistic means conveying fear through metaphor, together with the general study of the context as the key to reading the word and the source of building up layers of meanings and associations on it, allows us to compile a list of associations with the emotion. It is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Metaphors and Associations Conveying Fear*

Metaphors	Associations
1. <u>Fear is liquid</u> : anxiety flows, fear evaporated, a wave of alarm/fear, a tide of panic, fear rushes like a torrent, a torrent of terror, a flush of fear	Water, a river, a stream/flood/a flow, a wave/tsunami
2. <u>Fear is cold</u> : a shiver of panic, chilled by a wind of fear	Ice, cold, frost, freeze, ice frog, cold moth, marble, shivers, shudders, chills
3. <u>Fear is fog</u> : eyes cloudy with terror, dreamy terror, anxiety dissipated	Fog/mist/haze/cloud, blindness/opaqueness/opacity/murkiness, veil/glass/crystal
4. <u>Fear is fetters</u> : possessed by dread, fear clutched, fear restrained, seized by terror, took possession of the soul	Possession, seizure, grip/grasp/clench, tentacle, slavery, restriction/constraint /tightness

The analysis of examples where fear is linguistically represented and metaphorically conveyed allows us to compile a TASF. The core is verbalized by the lexeme “fear”, the center contains its synonyms (*dread, terror, horror, panic, fright, scare, startle, alarm, apprehension, trepidation, agitation, spook, anxiety, being afraid, worry, nervousness, chill, and intimidation*) selected from several dictionaries and thesauri, including *Meriam Webster’s Dictionary, Roget’s Thesaurus, Visual Thesaurus, English Dictionary of Emotional Phrases*, and the periphery includes metaphors conveying this emotional state selected from fiction (close periphery) and the authors’ associations with the emotion also chosen based on the analysis of examples from fiction (distant periphery). The four most common and dominant metaphorical images of fear and its associations discovered throughout the analysis of literary texts are presented in the periphery—fear is liquid, fear is cold, fear is fog, and fear is fetters. Visually, the field is presented in Figure 1.

The TASF summarizes metaphors of fear and the images they create. First, the metaphor of fear as liquid conveys the following ideas: (1) fluidity: Fear can flow and change form based on different circumstances; (2) immersion: Fear can overwhelm a person, creating the feeling of being submerged in water; and (3) transience: Fear can evaporate and recede depending on circumstances. Second, the metaphor of fear as cold captures such specifics of the emotion as: (1) its physical sensation: Just like cold, fear can trigger shivers in the body; (2) emotional freezing: Fear can create a sense of emotional numbness and inhibit passionate responses; (3) mental freezing: Fear can paralyze decision-making and the ability to move forward and grow; and (4) isolation: like cold environments, Fear can isolate people and make them retreat into themselves. Third, the metaphor of fear as fog suggests that (1) fear can obscure vision and distort perception by clouding judgment and preventing one from seeing the bigger picture, and (2) fear can be temporary and clear out or diminish with time, giving a sense of hope. Fourth, the metaphor of fear as fetters proposes the following concepts: (1) Fear can restrict personal freedom and take away autonomy; (2) fear can dominate thoughts and actions, creating a sense of helplessness and despair; and (3) fear can prevent people from expressing themselves and pursuing their true desires.

So, the study of fear through the lens of a text associative-semantic field, as demonstrated above, can uncover a complex and diverse palette of imagery and associations that metaphors conveying the emotion create. It is significant to emphasize that the list of associations is not exhaustive and can be supplemented and expanded with associations from other subgenres of fiction (novellas, parables, essays, dramas, fables, folklore, historical

fiction, fairy tales, fantasy, science fiction, and romance) and other literary genres (drama, poetry, and nonfiction). Text associative-semantic fields can also be compiled based on individual short stories (see Zhgun, 2023a). However, if students remain only in the sphere of proposed literary images without correlating them with their lives, they will not be able to acquire the full scope of knowledge and skills (Rybnikova, 1963, p. 6). Therefore, text associative-semantic fields should be further expanded and enriched with student readers' personal images and associations. This will allow them to turn to their own life experience, which, together with the author's life impressions and understanding of the logic of his images, will help them see life even more fully and foster their own metaphorical thinking and deeper engagement with literature in the future.

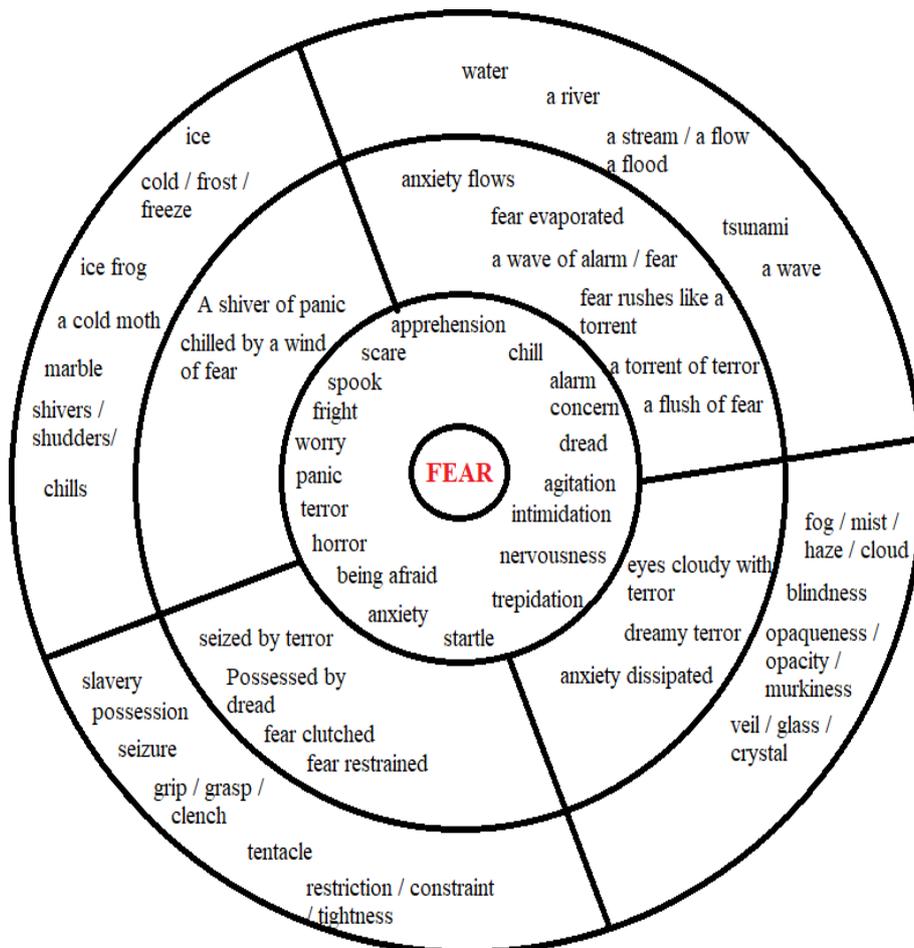


Figure 1. TASF of the notion of "fear".

## Conclusion

To sum up, the presented approach to analyzing a work of literary art through a careful study of metaphors and images they create together with the method of constructing a text associative-semantic field helps develop students' metaphorical thinking. It also encourages them to think beyond the words on the page, inviting them to explore the contexts that give literature its richness and deeper meanings hidden by the authors. Closer communication with the author, in turn, transforms their personalities and enriches their life experiences. In this case, the teacher's central role is to be the guide into the fascinating world of literature and develop a habit among students to delve into all the details of the works of art, discovering coherence and correlation in them. To

maintain students' motivation to read fiction, the teacher must be responsible for selecting the artwork, constantly awakening their interest and imagination, and pointing out places in the text where they can find answers to any of their life questions. The teacher must also remind students that reading is, although labor-intensive, but a rewarding activity.

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