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***HOT PANTS, COLD FISH AND COOL CUSTOMERS: IN  
SEARCH OF HISTORICAL METAPHORICAL EXTENSIONS  
IN THE REALM OF TEMPERATURE TERMS***

**Introduction**

It is beyond doubt that **metaphor** is one of the most pervading mechanisms in language. This fact was noticed long ago by the ancient philosophers and – in recent decades – it has been amply demonstrated and documented by cognitive-oriented research. As pointed out by Traugott and König (1991:207) although definitions of metaphor vary, most of them have certain elements in common, especially the notion of understanding and expressing one experience in terms of another, as well as directionality of transfer from a basic, usually concrete meaning to one more abstract (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Claudi and Heine 1986). So, metaphor involves mapping the meaning of one conceptual category (termed the *topic*) onto the second conceptual category (termed the *vehicle*) and – among others – Katz (1989) has recently shown that language users prefer to employ concrete vehicles when creating a metaphor, irrespective of the concreteness of the topic.<sup>1</sup>

In present-day linguistics word semantics is hardly ever analysed in isolation, but rather it tends to be analysed in groups or lexical sets such as, for example, **COLOUR TERMS**, **KINSHIP TERMS** or **TEMPERATURE TERMS** which are here understood as clusters of lexical items that are examined together either for the sake of comparison or common contrast or both (see Lehrer (1978:97)). It is almost universally accepted that, words which are used to talk about temperature, such as English *hot*, *warm*, *cold* and *cool* – apart from their primary referential meaning linked conceptually to a certain thermal state of an object – historically come to be applied metaphorically, especially to refer to various zones of human emotions and personalities (cf. Polish and

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<sup>1</sup> For a succinct survey of recent publications on metaphor see Nuessel (1991).

German *gorący/heiss* ‘hot’ *ciepły/warm* ‘warm’, *zimny/kalt* ‘cold’, *chłodny/kühl* ‘cool’ all used metaphorically). Lakoff (1987:383) discusses one of the most general metaphors of anger, that is <ANGER IS HEAT> which – when applied to fluids – yields one of the central metaphors ‘anger is the heat of a fluid in a container’ seen in the following exemplary material:

You make my *blood boil!*  
*Simmer* down!  
I had reached the *boiling point!*  
Let him *stew!*  
*Cool down*, buddy!

Notice that in the central metaphor *cool* corresponds to lack of anger (e.g. *keep cool*). One may say that the general tendency is that words associated with high temperatures, such as *heat* and *hot* are used to talk about strong, often negative emotions. In turn, words associated with medium, pleasant temperatures such as *warm* and *warmth* are generally associated with friendly, caring behaviour, and those words that are associated with low temperatures such as *cold* and *cool* are most frequently associated with either indifference, unfriendly behaviour or negatively charged feelings. A similar observation was earlier formulated by Lehrer (1990:216), who says that while *warm* and *cool* have pleasant connotation already in the context of physical comfort, *hot* and *cold* do not.

## The metaphorical extensions of English TEMPERATURE TERMS

The semantics of temperature adjectives is by no means virgin soil in linguistics, but has on the whole, received little attention, in particular when compared to another category of terms referring to perception, namely **COLOUR TERMS**.<sup>2</sup> As is well known temperature concepts are extensively used in metaphors in many languages, and English is no exception here. In the pages to follow, it is intended to discuss the historical emergence of metaphorical extensions of such temperature grade-terms as *scorching*, *heated*, *hot*, *warm*, *lukewarm*, *cool*, *cold* and *chilly*.<sup>3</sup> As noted by Cruse (1986:194), the boundaries between certain grade-terms, such as *lukewarm/cool* are typically somewhat vague, but the vagueness is less marked when the terms are explicitly contrasted with one another. When we look at the cluster of grade adjectives

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<sup>2</sup> For a survey of some relevant works see Sutrop (1998).

<sup>3</sup> I would like to express my gratitude to Mr Norbert Knutel and Mr Sławomir Koziol for helping me collect the data for this paper.

listed above we may conclude that some of them – along the lines drawn by Taylor (1989:49) and Kittay (1991:232) – qualify to be classified into two categories, that is basic level terms (*hot, warm, cool, cold* and *chilly*) and those terms that seem to be located below the basic level (*scorching, heated, lukewarm*). To be more specific, in addition to their high frequency of occurrence, basic level terms are generally short and structurally simple (i.e. monomorphemic). In contrast to this, terms found below the basic level are frequently either compounds or other derivatives.<sup>4</sup>

Kittay (1987:233) makes a distinction between monolexic terms and polylexemic expressions. For example, in a set of terms contrasting different fishing methods we would include monolexic *angling, trolling, harpooning* but also *fishing with a net* that is polylexemic. Similarly, the terms for silverware, in addition to the basic terms such as *spoon, fork* and *knife* include such compound terms as *soup spoon, salad fork* and *fish knife*. From the semantic point of view one of the most important criteria is that basic terms seem to establish the important contrasts within a larger field; it is fairly evident that when we analyse the temperature scale such pairs as *hot/cold, warm/cool/chilly* provide the most widely accepted contrasts while such terms as *scorching, heated* and *lukewarm* provide what Kittay (1991:232) refers to as peripheral terms.

Note that English and Sotho languages provide an interesting contrast with regard to the understanding of certain bodily and mental experiences. In English a range of emotional and physiological states, especially those involving excessive arousal, such as anger or sexual desire, are understood in terms of heat, that is expressions like *get hot under the collar, to be a hothead, to get hot and bothered, lose one's cool, a bitch on heat*. Such metaphorical uses may well have an experiential base in the physiological changes, such as raised body temperature and increased heart beat which accompany states of arousal. The metaphors are thus grounded in metonymy. For speakers of the Sotho languages, on the other hand, being hot is associated with a much wider range of experiences; any abnormal or unpleasant condition of the body is understood in terms of being hot, that is physical pain, illness (not only fever), extreme tiredness, insanity, menstruation, pregnancy as well as – and here Sotho understanding coincides with English – agitation impatience and anger. A person in one of these conditions has hot blood which needs cooling. Furthermore, such a person must be kept away from family and cattle in case he infects these with his heat. The experiential base of the metaphors is no doubt found in the physical environment of the speakers; the Sothos live in hot arid plateau, where the search for water is a major concern. It is unreasonable to suppose that, in this environment, heat gets metonymically associated with negatively valued states

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<sup>4</sup> In fact, *hot, warm, cool* and *cold* are treated as basic temperature words by Lehrer (1990).

<HOT IS BAD>, and coolness with positively valued states <COOL IS GOOD> (see Taylor (1989:140)). Let us turn our attention to the semantics of English temperature words.

**SCORCHING:** The history of the Germanic verb *scorch* ‘to burn the outside of’ (see O.N. *scorpna*), goes back to Mid.E. times when the verb functioned with the literal sense (1430 This gemme of maydenhede Was brent with brondes. Hir sydes *skorched*. > 1882 Much beaten about by sea-winds and *scorched* by poisonous suns.). The adjective *scorching* appears in the present-day sense ‘that scorches, burning’ in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (1563 The Body dried by broylyng blase Of preuy *schorchyng* Flame. > Mod.E. A dozen women carrying sacks of oranges under a *scorching* sun//It was *scorching* hot inside the greenhouse, and the plants were beginning to wilt//It’s been a *scorching* summer this year)<sup>5</sup> and – at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – there developed a novel metaphorical sense ‘astounding, sensational’ that is documented in English down to the 1970s (1896 Your joke is charming and I shall do you some *scorching* drawings for No. 8 [of *The Savoy*]. > 1976 Garbett scored with a *scorching* left foot drive.). The sense is absent from most of the dictionaries of Mod.E. usage that have been consulted<sup>6</sup> though the Ilson’s *Dictionary* defines the secondary sense of *scorching* as ‘biting, scathing’ as in, for example, *scorching criticism*.

**HEATED:** *Heat* is of clearly Germanic etymology (see Dutch *hitte*, O.N. *hiti*, German *heizen*), used at present in the literal sense ‘quality or condition of being hot’. In adjectival use, a *heated* discussion or argument is one in which people feel strongly and become angry and this is the Mod.E. metaphorical sense that emerges from the contexts provided by Deignan (1995:159) (Behind the next door a more *heated* discussion was taking place.//It was a very *heated* argument and they were shouting at each other.//One of the councillors attacked a fellow member during a *heated* debate.). As shown by the *OED* material – historically speaking – the literal sense ‘made hot, having the temperature raised’ (1617 Table furnished with these often *heated* meats. > Mod.E.), and the metaphorical sense ‘excited, fevered, angry’ (1593 But whether ‘twas the coldnesse of the King. That robb’d my Soldiers of their *heated* Spleene. > Mod.E.) appeared in the history of English almost simultaneously.

It seems that such present-day English syntagmas as *heated argument*, *heated debate*, *heated discussion* and *heated polemics* qualify to be labelled as what Fiske (1994:132) refers to as **inescapable pairs** in which the first word means very much the same as the second element, and any distinction between

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<sup>5</sup> Illustrative contexts taken from Procter’s *Dictionary* and Gadsby’s *Dictionary*.

<sup>6</sup> This metaphorical sense is echoed in the informal English use of *scorcher* ‘something that is outstanding or remarkable, especially in terms of speed, excitement’.

them is – in effect – forfeited. And so, for example, notice that the negative tinge present in the semantics of the noun *heat* ‘fever, anger’ is echoed in the semantics of the idiomatic expression *to turn the heat on* used in the sense ‘to subject to a severe cross-examination’ and also in the semantics of the adverb *heatedly*; when people speak *heatedly* they argue, they feel very strongly about the discussion and become angry with each other, as in the following contexts (Some members argued *heatedly* that they had not supported the emergency committee.//This is one of the most *heatedly* debated aspects of the theory.).<sup>7</sup>

**HOT:** The roots of Germanic *hot* (see Dutch *heet*, German *heiss*, O.N. *heitr*) go back to the Old English period and the semantic history of the adjective is the history of the proper adjective originally expressing a well-known quality or condition of material bodies, due to a high degree of the molecular energy known as heat, the sense with which *hot* has been present in English since Anglo-Saxon times (c1000 *leos wyr. by ⇒ cenned neah s( and on hatum stowum [...]* Swa *hattra* sumor, swa mara *unor* and li...et. > Mod.E.). Apart from the semantics of the adjective *hot* its literal is also present in what Fiske (1994:123) refers to as insipid simile *as hot as fire* and such proverbial expressions as, for example, *to beat the iron while it is hot/strike while the iron is hot* used in the sense ‘act at the best possible time’ well documented already in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (see Darwin’s *Dictionary*). Likewise, the literal meaning of *hot* seems to be echoed in the semantics of such 20<sup>th</sup> century underworld gallows humour compounds as *hot seat* and *hot squat* used in the sense ‘electrocution’ (see Ayto’s *Dictionary*).<sup>8</sup> The sense ‘producing an effect as of heat or burning, pungent, acrid’ is first documented in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (1548 The Englishemen..dranke hote wyne in the *hote* wether, and did eate all the hote frutes..that there fell sicke [etc.]. > Mod.E.).

It is worth pointing out that the figurative, metaphorical sense ‘fervent, passionate’ has been present in English since Anglo-Saxon times (971 *W(s him..seo Godes lufu to( s hat and to( s beorht on his heortan. > Mod.E.*), and during the Mid.E. period the adjective acquired the extended sense ‘angry, violent-tempered’ that has been documented until Mod.E. times (a1225 *He..het, on hat heorte, unhende~liche neomen hire > Mod.E.*). The sense is undoubtedly present in what Fiske (1994:123) and Evans’ *Dictionary* refer to as a moribund metaphor (*get*) *hot under the collar*; used in the sense ‘(get) angry, annoyed’ that

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<sup>7</sup> See Evans’ *Dictionary*. Interestingly, the adverb *heatedly* ‘with the warmth of temper’ is first recorded in the history of English as late as the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1862 Mrs. Courtney, (said Carr, rather *heatedly*.) do you place enough confidence in me to say candidly what this..is? > Mod.E.).

<sup>8</sup> Funk (1978:1) draws our attention to the fact that it is the language of the underworld that is particularly terse and vivid with such other examples of underworld humour as *gun mall*, used in the sense ‘racketeer’s girl friend’ or *stool pigeon* employed in the sense ‘a traitor who acts as a spy for the police’.

has been in use since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup> This sense discussed here is well documented in Deignan (1995) where someone who has a *hot temper* is defined as someone who becomes angry or excited very easily (As child I had a really *hot temper*.//Joanne worries that his *hot temper* will lead to violence.//He is so *hot tempered* and excitable.).<sup>10</sup> Likewise, in current Australian English (see Ramson's *Dictionary*), the sense 'angry, violent' clearly emerges from the semantics of the syntagma *hot coffee* which – at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – developed the sense 'a show of antagonism, a display of anger' (1885 He was an Englishman – one of the worst sort – overbearing, ignorant, and between him and me there usually was *hot coffee*).

Furthermore, this metaphorical sense of *hot* is echoed in the semantics of such idiomatic expressions as *hot air* 'boasting, threats', as well as *hot-air merchant* used in the sense 'one whose utterances are full of sound and fury' (see Evans' *Dictionary*). Also, if people speak about something *hotly* or if some issue is *hotly contested* they speak in a way that shows that they feel very strongly about that subject, especially if they feel angry or excited about it.<sup>11</sup> This sense of the adverb clearly emerges from the following contexts (This problem has been *hotly* debated.//The book has been *hotly* disputed by experts in the various fields that it touches on.//'How many times have I told you,' I responded *hotly*, 'No surprises in meetings.'). Notice also that the heat of strong feelings and enthusiasm is seen in the semantics of the idiomatic expression *to blow hot and cold* meaning 'to vacillate between enthusiasm and apathy' (see Rees' *Dictionary*).<sup>12</sup>

At the beginning of the Mod.E. period there appeared another metaphorical sense 'excited with sexual desire, lustful'<sup>13</sup> (1500-20 Thair cumis Šung

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<sup>9</sup> Laflin (1996:41) maintains that the most adequate antonym of (*get*) *hot under the collar* is *to keep one's cool*. Ammer (1993:176) draws our attention to the fact that the heat of anger has been noticed since ancient times, and it often manifests itself in a flushed, warm face and neck. The expression has been in use since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>10</sup> Also, today the sense clearly emerges in such phraseological unit *hot and bothered* 'in a state of exasperated agitation' (1958 Then she emerged, *hot and bothered*, glasses half down her nose).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Fiske (1994:123). Notice that Lat. *candidus* used in the literally sense 'warm, hot' was metaphorically transferred and applied in the sense 'fervent, passionate' as shown by the following quotation from Cicero: *Quibus periculosa et calida consilia quietis cogitatis splendidiora videantur* (Cicero *De officiis* 1.82) 'For whom dangerous and passionate advise seems to be better than consideration at ease).

<sup>12</sup> This expression comes from one of Aesop's *Fables*. On a cold day, a satyr comes across a man blowing his fingers to make them warm. He takes the man home and gives him a bowl of hot soup. The man blows on the soup, to cool it. At this the satyr throws him out, exclaiming that he wants nothing to do with a man who can *blow hot and cold* from the same mouth.

<sup>13</sup> Today the sense is also echoed in the US slang phrases *to have/get hot pants* used in the sense 'to be/become aroused with sexual desire' and also *hot pants*, which apart from the sense 'female shorts' is, used figuratively in the sense 'a highly sexed (young) woman'.

monkis..And in the courte thair *hait flesche dantis*. > Mod.E.) which is today clearly discernible in the semantics of such American English expressions as *hot-assed* used in the sense ‘sexually aroused’ (I was with this *hot-assed* dame who kept rubbing against me), and *hot to trot* currently employed in the sense ‘sexually aroused’ (She is really *hot to trot*).<sup>14</sup> Notice that lust, sexual desire or lack of them are conceptualised in terms of temperature in a number of expressions such as the ones listed in Lakoff (1987:410): I’ve got the *hots* for her//Hey baby, *light my fire*//I am *burning with desire*//She is *frigid*//Don’t be *cold* to me. The sense clearly emerges from the semantics of *hot pants* and – as indicated by Lehrer (1990:216) – the likely interpretation for *hot suit* is something either very sexy or modish.

In informal speech, evidenced by, for example, Dickson’s *Dictionary* the adjective *hot* is currently employed to encode the idea that something is either very good, strong or successful. In other words, if you describe something as *hot*, you mean that everyone is interested in it because it is currently either very important or currently considered very good (There is also home cinema, the *hot* topic of the moment.//As investors we’re looking for the area that will be *hot* next year or the year after.).<sup>15</sup> Evans’ *Dictionary* gives the example of *not so hot* that is currently used in the sense ‘not so good, not very satisfactory’. This metaphorical extension – as documented by the *OED* – is a fairly recent development as its roots go back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when the adjective is first attested in the sense ‘exceptionally good or fine’ (1895 ‘*Hot work!*’ cried the lieutenant deliriously. > Mod.E.). The currency of this usage in Modern English is confirmed by – among others – Deignan (1995) and Robertson (1998:137–138) (Now he runs the *hottest* nightclub in Hollywood.//The song is still high in the hit parade, seeing off *hot* competition.).<sup>16</sup>

As pointed out by Deignan (1995), Dickson’s (1990) *Dictionary*, Partridge’s *Dictionary* and Ayto’s *Dictionary* in informal speech, and – in particular – in the language of the underworld the adjective *hot* is used to describe stolen property and, hence, property that is easily identifiable and difficult to dispose of (He knew the radios were *hot* but he hadn’t grasped the real significance of the situation.//Many stolen works of art have been recovered recently..which suggests that thieves are finding them too *hot* to handle). Likewise, the sense ‘stolen’ emerges from a number of complex expressions given in Partridge’s *Dictionary* as *hot box/hot hack* ‘stolen automobile’, *hot ice* ‘diamonds that must

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<sup>14</sup> Examples and illustrative contexts taken from Spears (1991).

<sup>15</sup> Notice also that in German *heiss* ‘hot’ apart from the literal sense developed in youth colloquial language ‘good’, ‘excellent’, for example, *eine heisse Bluse*, *ein heisses Buch*.

<sup>16</sup> The sense is illustrated with a following humorous quotation from J. Mitchell’s *Big Yellow Taxi*: They paved paradise, And put up a parking lot, With a pink hotel, A boutique, and a swinging *hot spot*.

be promptly disposed of’, *hot car drop/farm* ‘a garage where the identity of stolen cars is changed’ and *hot stuff* which in the 1920s and 1930s was used in the sense ‘goods known to be stolen, goods wanted by the police’.<sup>17</sup>

**WARM:** The etymology of the adjective goes back to Anglo-Saxon times when this Germanic *warm* (see Dutch and German *warm*, O.N. *varmr*), was used in its historically primary sense ‘moderately hot’ (a1000 Sumor æfter cymedð, *wearm* ...ewideru. > Mod.E.). One finds good grounds to doubt the validity of the generalisation formulated in Deignan (1995), who says that while *heat/hot* are usually employed to talk about emotions which are strong and often negative, the adjective *warm* is used to describe emotions that are friendly, caring and positive.

Although the generalisation made by Deignan (1995) finds partial grounds in language data, one should not ignore the fact that not infrequently *warm* appears in collocations that can hardly be said to be positively charged such as, for example, *to be in a warm corner* that is used in present-day English in the sense ‘to be in an awkward position’ (see Evans’ *Dictionary*). Earlier, during the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> century there developed the sense ‘vigorously conducted, dangerous’ particularly richly documented till the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and especially apparent in such phrases as *warm work* ‘hot fighting’, *to make it/things warm for* ‘to attack, to go for’ and *a warm reception* ‘a vigorous onslaught or resistance’ (1627 The Sweat, a vessell of *warme* imployment or hot seruice. > 1841 We must give him [the rival] a *warm* reception.).

The metaphorical sense ‘zealous, keen, heated’ that developed at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century was very common in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (1390 Yong conseil, which is to *warm*, Er men be war doth ofte harm. > 1791 Of all men, the most dangerous is a *warm*, hot-headed, zealous atheist.). In turn, the sense ‘hot-tempered’ developed in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (1547 My Lord your Brother hathe thys Afternone a lyttell made me *warme*. Yt was fortunate we war so muche dystant, for I suppose els I schulde have bytten hym), and is documented in the *OED* till the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1855 ‘It’s an expression of mine when I’m angry.’ ‘You’re *warm*,’ says he.), while the current metaphorical sense ‘full of love, cordial or tender’ as shown by, among others, the *OED* and Ammer (1993) appears first at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (c1480 I behald our fedderis fair and gent,..My hart is *warme*. > Mod.E.), which tends to collocate either with agent-noun or equivalent noun, for example, *a warm friend/supporter*, *warm thanks* (Evans’ *Dictionary*), and in parasynthetic collocations such as, for example, *warm-bosomed*, *warm-coloured*, *warm-complexioned*, *warm-constitutioned*, *warm-gloved*, *warm-tempered*, *warm-veined*, *warm-headed*.

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<sup>17</sup> For the analysis of the semantics of *hot* as the synaesthetic adjective transferring from one sensory experience (i.e. touch) to another (i.e. taste) see Lehrer (1978) and Williams (1976).



In present day English those individuals and actions that are friendly and caring may be qualified as *warm* (You are a *warm*, caring person.//We were full of *warm*, feelings about the country and its people, who had been friendly and helpful to us.//At Trevoise Golf and Country Club, you'll always find a *warm* welcome.). The expression *a warm welcome* meaning 'enthusiastic, friendly greeting' has been around since at least the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century (1763 Whoe'er has travell'd life's dull round, May sigh to think he still has found the *warmest* welcome at an inn).<sup>18</sup> Notice that Ammer's (1993:400) observation that a very similar expression *a warm reception* has just the opposite meaning, that is 'a greeting full of hostility' is not confirmed by such present-day dictionaries as, for example, Wehmeier's *Dictionary* where both expressions, that is *a warm welcome* and *a warm reception* are used interchangeably in the sense 'enthusiastic, friendly welcome'. Also, observe that the verbal expression *to warm to someone* is currently used in the sense 'begin to feel friendly, positive feelings towards somebody' (From the first, the public *warmed* to him//At first people were afraid of him; then they *warmed* to him).

**LUKEWARM:** The historical sense of this L.Mid.E. compound (*luke* + *warm*) is that of 'moderately warm, tepid' (1398 The broth of clete..comfortyth the teeth: yf it be luke *warme* hote [*Bodl. E. Mus. MS. lewke* hote] holde in the mouth. > Mod.E.). Fillmore (1982) contrasts the semantics of English adjective *lukewarm* with that of Japanese *nurui*. On his interpretation, both words profile the state 'at room temperature', but for English speakers *lukewarm* is used for liquids that are ideally hot or ideally cold, whereas for Japanese speakers the concept of *nurui* is used only for liquids that are ideally hot.

Something, especially liquid, that is qualified as *lukewarm* is not really very warm, and because *lukewarm* things are neither warm nor cold, the adjective is used metaphorically to talk about behaviour that is not really very friendly or enthusiastic, but which is not openly negative or unfriendly either. One may say that the adjective is often used in this way to show that you had hoped or expected that people would be more friendly or enthusiastic. Already at the beginning of the Mod.E. period (1522>Mod.E.) the adjective acquired the metaphorical sense used of persons, their actions, attributes, etc. 'having little warmth or depth of feeling, lacking zeal, enthusiasm or ardour, indifferent' (c1522 Like as god said in thapocalips vnto the churche of Loadice. Thou arte neyther hote nor cold but *luke warme*, I would thou were colde yt thou mighteste waxe warme. >Mod.E.). This is exactly the sense that emerges from the contexts provided by Deignan (1995) (Haig had always been *lukewarm* about this idea.//He muttered a *lukewarm* congratulation.//They showed at best a *lukewarm*

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<sup>18</sup> Also, if someone does something *warmly*, they do it with enthusiasm and positive feelings (He was *warmly* congratulated by his five colleagues.//The project has been *warmly* welcomed in the West London, borough of Hounslow.//He shook my hand *warmly*.).

attitude and at worst a positive hostility towards public involvement). At the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (1693 > Mod.E.) the adjective *lukewarm* started to be employed in the substantivised sense ‘one who is by no means enthusiastic’ (1693 Let such Cowards and *Lukewarms* do what they will, – I shall always Condemn Vice and Sin. > 1890 One enthusiast is worth a dozen ‘*lukewarms*’.).

**TEPID:** The etymological roots of the adjective *tepid* go back to Latin *tepid-us* ‘lukewarm’ and dialectal French *tépide* originally – from the early 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards (c1400 >Mod.E.) – used in the sense ‘moderately or slightly warm’ usually in reference to liquids. In most general terms, one may say that the adjective is used metaphorically in a similar way to *lukewarm* to talk about feelings or reactions that are not very strong or positive. If you describe something such as a feeling or reaction as *tepid*, you mean that it lacks enthusiasm or liveliness (With the film opening here this week, early British reviews have been equally *tepid*.//Unfortunately, when she performed the reception was *tepid* to say the least.//They gave only *tepid* support.). At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century *tepid* appears first in the figurative sense (1513 Gyf Crystis faithfull knyghtis lyst ws be,..Than man we..Nowder be abasit, *tepit*, nor it blunt. >Mod.E.).

**COOL:** The history of the Germanic adjective *cool* (see Dutch *koel*, German *kühl*), goes back to O.E. *c /īl* when the word was originally used in the literal historically primary sense ‘moderately cold’ (c1000 Swa oft (sprin e utawalle□ of clife harum *col* and hlutor. > Mod.E.) said of a temperature which – in contrast with heat – is cold enough to be agreeable and refreshing, or – in contrast with cold – is not so low as to be positively disagreeable or painful. The authors of the *OED* provide sufficient evidence to conclude that in earlier use *cool* was sometimes not distinguished from *cold*. Notice that the original physical sense of *cool* is petrified in a number of expressions such as, for example, *cool chamber*; *cool-store*, ‘a place in which perishable goods may be kept’, *cool cup/cool tankard* ‘a cooling drink’, *cool-house* ‘a glass-house kept at a cool temperature’, *cool-trough* ‘a trough in which anything is cooled’, *coolroom* ‘a refrigerated room in a warehouse’, *cool safe* ‘a cabinet for the storage of perishable foodstuffs’, etc.<sup>19</sup>

When used in the secondary, metaphorical sense to denote one who is marked by steady dispassionate calmness *cool* has been around the block a time or two (see Dalzell 1996:126). Note that in present-day English *cool* is used to describe behaviour that is very much different from the behaviour described by words such as *hot* and *warm*; *cool* feelings or behaviour are calm, not passionate or excited. This figurative sense became common during the E.Mod.E. period (c1440 Thow..thynkist in thyn wit that is ful *cole* That he nys but a verray propre fole That louthy paramouris to harde and hote. > Mod.E.), and today it is

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<sup>19</sup> See Evans’ *Dictionary* and Delbreyde’s *Dictionary*.

phraseologically echoed in, among others, the insipid simile as *as cool as a cucumber* used in the sense ‘calm, composed’. Ammer (1993:70) points to the fact that the cool temperature of cucumbers apparently was observed long ago, and indeed one modern writer quotes recent evidence that the inside of a cucumber on a warm day is 20 degrees cooler than the air. On the contrary, Spears (1996:7–8) contradicts this view saying that *cucumbers are not necessarily cool* and attributes the virility of the idiom to the alliterative effect it produces.

Likewise, the metaphorical sense ‘calm, composed’ is present in the American and Canadian English proverbial expression *A man should study ever to keep cool* meaning ‘one should always try to be calm’.<sup>20</sup> Ammer (1993:70) gives the example of slangy Americanism to *cool it* employed in the sense ‘to calm down’ that emerged in the 1950s and caught on soon afterwards (1953 *Cool it, girl. Nobody’s interested*). In this context, somewhat speculatively, Evans’s *Dictionary* discusses the etymology of the expression *cool hundred/thousand* (or any other sum used in the sense ‘the whole of the sum named’), *cool* being emphatic here. It is suggested that it may have originally had reference to the calm deliberation with which the sum of money was counted out. Whatever the origin of the expression, this is the sense with which *cool* is used in Fielding’s *Tom Jones* (He had lost a *cool* hundred, and would play no longer.).

The rise of the sense ‘wanting in cordiality’ can be traced back to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century (1675 I found him at first *cooler* in his reception then when I left him. >Mod.E.). *Cool* people are calm and seem to think carefully before they say or do things and – consequently – cool behaviour is calm and confident and seems well thought-out. (He’s likely to receive a formal but *cool* reception.//Mr Hans Van Den Broek is reportedly *cool* about the idea). This sense goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when *cool* – especially in such phrases as *cool customer* (see Fiske 1994:60) – started to be employed in the sense ‘assured and unabashed, impudent’ (1873 He certainly knew that such a request was a trifle *cool*. > Mod.E.). This sense also emerges from other present-day contexts provided by Deignan (1995) (What I believe we have here is a *cool* and clever criminal.//The absolutely essential thing is to remain very *cool* and calm in these difficult moments.).

Moreover, in present-day English *cool* can be used as a noun in informal speech, when applied to someone’s temper and his unemotional attitude and when if you *play it cool*, you behave in a calm way in a stressful situation (I thought they *played it very cool* myself.), and when someone *loses his cool* he becomes angry and/or behaves in excited way (During a Test Match the pressure is so intense she has been known to *lose her cool*.), and if he *keeps his cool*, he controls his temper

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<sup>20</sup> See Mieder’s *Dictionary*.

and behaves calmly, even though he is in a difficult or frightening situation (He *kept his cool* and sense of humour, amid the tears of other jockeys and trainers.). As demonstrated by the *OED* the sense goes back to Shakespeare's times (1593 'Twill make them *coole* in zeale vnto your Grace. > Mod.E.).

Notice also that the verb *cool* is used metaphorically in a number of ways, many of which are associated with the idea of losing intensity, strength or force. Thus, if the relationships or feelings are becoming less friendly, you say that they are *cooling* (The formerly warm relations between the two countries have *cooled*./Now that the affair has *cooled*, he has moved back in with his wife.). If you have been angry, and you *cool down* or *cool*, you slow down or become less angry (Tempers have *cooled down* a bit and I hope we could sort things out between us./You should each make your own lives, and when emotions have *cooled*, see if there's a possibility of friendship.). If something such as a tense situation *cools off*, it becomes less tense and the people involved become calmer. If you have been angry about something and you *cool off*, you become less angry and deal with things more calmly (You're angry, Wade, that's all. You ought to let yourself *cool off* for a few days.). A *cooling-off period* is a period when the parties take a break in negotiations and a *cooler*, means in American slang 'prison, cell', a place where some people are put to *cool off* (see Evans' *Dictionary*), which again – in American slang – is used in the sense 'to stay in hiding until the police hue-and-cry is over (see Partridge's *Dictionary*).

Dictionary sources that have been consulted show that the adjective *cool* is beyond doubt one of the more amorphous and ubiquitous of slang words used by American youth in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the adjective started to be loosely used – originally in American English – as a general term of approval (1948 The bebop people have a language of their own... Their expressions of approval include 'cool!'), used in the world of musicians and other artists. At the same time, *cool* began to take on a different specific figurative meaning applied to detached, stylish hipsters, rebels and Bohemians. According to Dalzell (1996:68), *cool* was the undisputed champion of approval-expressing slang in the 1950s, both in the mainstream and the beat youth, also in Australian English where it has become a colloquialism used in the sense 'attractive excellent' (see Delbridge's *Dictionary*).<sup>21</sup> We shall only be echoing the view expressed by Dalzell (1996:128) when we say that the adjective *cool* has evolved to the most general of terms of approval or assent, a yeoman jack of all trades of youth slang.

**COLD:** The story of Germanic *cold* (Dutch *kould*, German *kalt*, O.N. *kaldr*) goes back to Anglo-Saxon times when the word was the proper adjective expressing a well-known quality of the air or of other substances exciting one of the primary physical sensations, due to the abstraction of heat from the surface

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<sup>21</sup> Today, the word is also used in a clipped variant *coo* '.

of the body (c950 Stodon..(t gloedum for□on *cald* w(s and wearmdon hia. >Mod.E.). Contextually, the adjective was used with reference to material substances, which in their natural state communicate this sensation, by contact and hence, it is present in such combinations as *ice-cold*, *key-cold*, *stone-cold*. Also, the physical, historically primary sense emerges from a number of insipid similes such as *as cold as ice* and *as cold as marble*, both used in the sense ‘cold, freezing cold’ (see Fiske 1994:56).

As pointed out by Ruhl (1989:186) the spectrum of metaphorical senses of *cold* ranges over all degrees of negative and neutral emotions, such as ‘angry’, ‘reserved’, ‘terrified’ and ‘dead’. During the Mid.E. period there developed the first metaphorical sense ‘void of ardour or intensity of feeling or enthusiasm’ (c1175 Heortan, ⇒et *calde* weren ⇒urh ilefleaste. >Mod.E.). The next sense-thread ‘void of sensual passion or heat’ appears in Shakespeare’s times and is documented down through the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1597 He preached pure maid and praised *cold* chastity. > 1984 Olivier..makes his prince something of a *cold* cod.).<sup>22</sup> Notice that the sense seems to be phraseologically petrified in the idiomatic expression *to leave (a person) cold* used in the sense ‘to fail to interest or excite’. (cf. F. *cela me laisse froid*, G. *das lässt mich kalt.*), documented in the *OED* from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century till present day English (1857 An orator may discourse very eloquently on injustice in general, and leave his audience *cold*. > Mod.E.). Likewise, in a slightly modified version the sense seems to be echoed in the present-day syntagma *a cold car* employed in the sense ‘a model of car that is not popular and hence hard to sell’ (see Dickson’s *Dictionary*).

Today, *cold-blooded* people, as opposed to *hot-blooded* ones – a relic of the medieval belief that the temperature of the blood controlled a person’s temper and was boiling hot when one was excited and ice cold when one was calm – are those that are not easily excited or those with little feeling. This metaphorical sense of *cold* is present in the semantics of the expressions *in cold blood* and *done in cold blood* meaning ‘not in the heat of temper’ where – as suggested by Evans’ *Dictionary* – the allusion is to the old notion that the temperature of the blood ruled the temper. From the E.Mod.E. onwards *cold* occurs prefixed to other adjectives to indicate the combination of the two qualities, especially in such combinations as *cold-skinned*, *cold-spirited*, *cold-tempered*, *cold-blooded* (1598 Those *cold-spirited* peers.).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Notice that Lat. *frigidus* ‘cool, cold’ may be metaphorically employed in the sense ‘sluggish, indifferent’, in such contexts taken from Cicero and Ovid as, for example: *Frigidus* in venerem ‘cpld in love’, Lentus in dicendo et paene *frigidus* ‘sluggish in speech to the point of boredom’, Non *frigida* virgo ‘not a frigid (that is hot) girl’, Amicus *frigidus* ‘indifferent friend’.

<sup>23</sup> Mühlhäusler (1985) analyses the metaphorical senses of *cold* in Tok Pisin where the word is used in the sense ‘calm, unaroused’ in such collocations as *bel i kol* ‘to be unaroused, in a peaceful mood’.

In a certain grotesque way, the metaphorical echoes of the historically primary sense ‘of low temperature’ are seen in the sense ‘dead’, in particular in the semantics of the expression *before he/she was cold* meaning ‘shortly after death’ which – according to Ayto’s *Dictionary* – is a full-blown metaphor dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>24</sup> In the same vein, Rawson (1991:91) informs us that the collocation *cold meat* is used in the sense ‘cadaver’ on both sides of the Atlantic. Further, not without justification then, *cold meat box* is employed in the sense ‘coffin’, a *cold-meat cart* is used in the sense ‘hearse’, a *cold-meat party* means ‘a wake, funeral’ while the idiomatic expression *to make cold meat of someone* is employed in the sense ‘to kill a person’,<sup>25</sup> that is used with reference to the action that provides work for *cold cook* ‘an undertaker at funerals’ (see Partridge’s *Dictionary*).

To pursue other negatively charged metaphorical senses of *cold* we see that during the course of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the adjective started to be used in the metaphorical sense ‘showing no warm or friendly feeling’ (1557 *The complaint of a hot woer, delayed with doutfull cold answers.* > Mod.E.), which clearly emerges from the present-day dictionary material (He was very *cold* and uncaring about it, as if it wasn’t important.//He used to say to me in a *cold*, calculating way, ‘I’m not going to leave any bruises.’). Naturally, someone who is *cold* tends to hide his emotions and seems unfriendly.<sup>26</sup> The offshoots of this sense are visible in the present-day moribund metaphor *cold fish*<sup>27</sup> used in the sense ‘hardhearted, passionless person’ (see Fiske 1994:56 and Evans’ *Dictionary*), and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century slang use of *cold* in the overtly negative sense ‘unpleasant’ (see Dalzell 1996), as well as in the comparative phrase *as cold as presbyterian charity* which clearly implies lack of any imaginable feeling (see Bartlett’s *Dictionary*).

**CHILLY:** The adjective *chilly* is a derivative of the noun *chill*, not exemplified in other Germanic languages, the first appearance of which is documented for Old English (c897 *For ciele [Cott. cile] nele se slawa erian on wintra.*). The noun *chill* seems to have become obsolete by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, after the verb *to chill* and the adjective *chilly* had been formed from it, its place being taken by the noun *cold*. Since the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>24</sup> Mühlhäusler (1985) draws our attention the fact that Tok Pisin *kol* may be used in the metaphorical sense ‘dead’ as in, for example, *bateri i kol* ‘battery is dead’.

<sup>25</sup> Also, notice that the verb *to chill* has in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the language of American street gangs acquired the sense ‘to kill’, apparently with reference to the rapid drop in temperature after death (see Ayto’s *Dictionary*).

<sup>26</sup> The adverbial use carries very much the same overtones; if someone does something *coldly*, he appears unfriendly and does not show any feelings (She looked at him *coldly*.//The speech was received *coldly*.//The organization was *coldly* efficient.).

<sup>27</sup> Ammer (1999:238) claims that Shakespeare in his *Winter’s Tale* was probably the first one to have employed the expression (It was thought she was a woman and she turned into a *cold fish*).

the noun has been revived, apparently as a new formation from the verb (see the *OED*). The adjective is documented for the first time at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the sense ‘appreciably or disagreeably cold’ (1570 Ne heate..May bate my *chillie* colde. > Mod.E.). In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there developed the metaphorical sense ‘void of, or adverse to warmth of feeling’ (1874 Very *chilly* to general theories, loftily disdainful to the men of a principle.), especially visible in such combinations as *chilly-fingered* or *chilly-hearted* (1865 He was *chilly-hearted*, but yet quite capable of enough love to make him a good son.). In present-day English a *chilly* relationship is one in which people are polite, but clearly do not like each other (The business council, a powerful association of chief executives, gave him a *chilly* reception.//He decided to terminate his *chilly* relationship with Stephen.).<sup>28</sup> However, in the 1970s and 1980s *chilly* – as many other negatively loaded adjectives such as, *critical*, *icy*, *raw*, *rude*, *wicked* – developed the sense ‘good’ (see Dalzell 1996:171).

### Concluding remarks

It appears that Locke was the first one to claim that the designations of abstract concepts in language almost always originate in the names of concrete objects or events. Others considered this to be a universal tendency for abstract meanings to develop from concrete ones, for example Bloomfield (1933) who said that *refined and abstract meanings largely grow out of concrete meanings*.<sup>29</sup> This over-all view is confirmed by modern semantic and lexicographic research that proves unambiguously that many of our common conceptual metaphors involve a transfer of meaning from a concrete – or at least visible – semantic domain (see Kay 2000:279). Examples are found as far back in history as in ancient Hebrew, for example ‘*ol* and English *yoke* whose original sense was ‘the wooden cross-piece of the neck of a beast of burden’ > ‘the hard work of carrying a yoke’ > ‘any hard work’ > ‘the yoke of religious observance’. In Hebrew the metaphorical sense is also found in set phrases such as *lišbor’ol* ‘to break the yoke’ and – as hypothesised by Sappan (1983:65) – it is reasonable to suppose that these are the origins of its metaphoric development. A historically derived instance of this metaphor is seen in:

She is *seething with rage*.

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<sup>28</sup> Notice that the negative load present in the adjective *chilling* is even stronger. A *chilling* book, film, or piece of information is one that makes you feel horrified, frightened, or anxious so that you shiver and feel cold (He described in *chilling* detail how he attacked her during one of their frequent rows.//Where is the town where Bram Stoker wrote his *chilling* novel, *Dracula*.).

<sup>29</sup> Bloomfield (1933:20).

where the speakers do not normally use *seethe* to indicate physical boiling, the temperature metaphor is still there when *seethe* is used to indicate anger. In other words the concrete – and historically original – sense is gone while the metaphorical sense remains in the system (see Lakoff 1987:383).

The largest metaphorical domains for temperature adjectives in many languages are those which have to do with various human interactions, relations, reactions, emotions, etc. The pattern we discussed here seems to be a part of a larger whole that may be defined as the use of words denoting sense-impressions to describe abstract experiences: *bitter feelings, sweet disposition, warm reception, cold disdain, hot temper*. On a related conceptual domain such as **VISION** one such form is the wide use of images drawn from *light* and allied sensory experiences to denote intellectual and moral phenomena: *to throw light on, to put in a favourable light, leading lights, enlighten*.

One can venture the following ontological correspondence drawing on the generalisation formulated by Lakoff (1997:387) <**THE TEMPERATURE SCALE IS EMOTION/INVOLVEMENT/ANGER/ SCALE**>. One may say that human interrelations are viewed as having **inherent temperature scales**. And so, for example, various passions such as hatred and jealousy or anger are generally associated with high temperatures. On the contrary, the general rule is that indifference and disdain are often linked to low temperatures. Secondly, it seems that the metaphorical developments discussed in the foregoing may be qualified as examples of the so-called **parallel development**. The figurative use of temperature grade-terms employed originally to encode some degree on the temperature scale and – metaphorically – in the historically secondary sense ‘type of attitude, behaviour or emotional state’ are very much similar to other cases of parallel developments such as the case of figurative extensions of the verbs for **HOLDING/GRASPING** to encode the secondary metaphorical sense **UNDERSTANDING** in a number of European languages, such as English *grasp, catch*; French *comprendre, saisir*; Italian *capire*; German *begreifen, greifen*; Polish *łapać, chwytać (w lot)*.

The sample analysis carried out in the foregoing seems to confirm the general hypothesis advanced earlier by – among others – Lee (1990:212) that older words – in this case those words the etymological roots of which go back to Anglo-Saxon times – become more polysemous than more recent additions to the English vocabulary stock. Also, frequently used words, and the temperature degree-words analysed above undoubtedly belong to the core vocabulary, have greater opportunity to be applied to new conceptual domains and – therefore – tend to develop more extensive polysemous strings than those words that belong to what one refers to as secondary vocabulary. The relation of word’s polysemy to word-frequency was observed long time ago. By systematically comparing the relative frequency of various words with the number of senses in which they are used Zipf (1945) arrived at the conclusion which he termed the **principle of the**



**diversity of meanings** which may be summarised in his own words that there is a direct relationship between the number of different meanings of a word and its relative frequency of occurrences.<sup>30</sup>

The semantics of temperature adjectives is by no means virgin soil in linguistic investigations, but has, on the whole, received little attention, especially when compared to other categories of perception such as, for example, **COLOUR TERMS** analysed in, among others, Berlin and Kay (1969). We hope to have demonstrated that the domain of **TEMPERATURE TERMS** is worth deep and full-fledged studies, both monolingual and comparative. It goes without saying that there are many generalisations and regularities to be revealed. Also, human interrelationships seem to have their own inherent heat scales in particular languages and across languages. Therefore, it seems fairly obvious that there are many fascinating cross-linguistic generalisations in the realm of temperature domain to be formulated in the research to come.

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<sup>30</sup> See Zipf (1945:144).

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