

A Contrastive Study of Conceptual Metaphor of Love in English and Vietnamese Songs in the 20th Century

Hà Lê Hồng Hoa; Nguyễn Thị Mỹ Liên ;Phạm Văn Phước_Tay Nguyen University (ID:92)

1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of love is universal and the ways in which it is expressed can vary significantly across cultures and languages. Due to the influence of different cultures, metaphorical concepts are somewhat culturally different, particularly in music lyrics. It could cause difficulties for the listeners especially for those who are studying English and Vietnamese as a foreign language. This study is then carried out to investigate the use of metaphor about love from cognitive perspective in English and Vietnamese songs composed in the twentieth century.

3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What metaphors of love can be conceptualized in English and Vietnamese 20th century songs?
2. What are the similarities and differences between conceptual metaphors of love in English and Vietnamese 20th century songs?

4 METHODOLOGY

- + The qualitative approach is applied to classify, describe and analyze data.
- + The quantitative approach is applied to present the data in terms of the number and the frequency of occurrence in percentage of conceptual metaphor related to “love” in English and Vietnamese songs, through which their similarities and differences are pointed out.

Comparison of Characteristics of Two Cultural Types

CRITERION	TRANQUILITY-NOMINATED CULTURE (agriculture-originated)	MOBILITY-NOMINATED CULTURE (nomadic)
The behaviour to natural environment	Respecting and living in harmony with the nature	Defying and having the ambition of controlling the nature
Cognitive way and thinking way	Inclining to collective and dialectical (relation-respected); subjective, impulsive and experience-based	Inclining to analytical, metaphysical (element-valued); objective, rational and experimental
Community-organizing	Organizing principles Love-respecting, virtue (righteousness)-respecting, Literature-respecting, women-respecting	physical strength-respecting, force-based, talent-respecting, male-dominated
	Organizing modes Being flexible, democratic, community-based	Being principle-based, monarchical and individual-based
The behavior to social environment	Being harmonized in receiving other culture, being soft and peaceable in dealing with the outside pressures	Being ethnocentric in receiving other culture; being ironclad and hungry for success in dealing with the outside forces

6 IMPLICATIONS

- + The research so far suggests that many students who study contrastive linguistics should apply this conceptual metaphor. It could help students better visualize and practice the reading logics of comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. These metaphors could also help teachers model more effectively for students what it means to read in their fields.
- + Using conceptual metaphors in general and conceptual metaphors of *love* in particular that would help Vietnamese learners of English and English learners of Vietnamese as a foreign language further understand one concept in terms of another.

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2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Kovecses (2010) denotes metaphor as one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. We can set the formula for this view of metaphor that conceptual domain A is conceptual domain B, which is called a conceptual metaphor. The conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is called the source domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain.

Harlow (1958) was one of the first psychologists to scientifically investigate the nature of human love and affection. He believes that love is a wondrous state, deep, tender, and rewarding.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) adopted a strategy named “mapping”. Conceptual domain A could be understood by conceptual domain B because there is a set of correspondences or inter-domain mappings of concepts between them.

5 KEY FINDINGS

Frequency of Conceptual Metaphors of Love in English vs Vietnamese 20th Century Songs

No.	Conceptual Metaphors	English		Vietnamese	
		Number (NE)	% (FE)	Number (NV)	% (FV)
1	Love is fate	6	5%	15	12.5%
2	Love is insanity and blindness	20	17%	5	4%
3	Love is plant	15	12.5%	20	17%
4	Love is natural phenomenon	13	10.7%	0	0%
5	Love is a game	13	10.7%	0	0%
6	Love is a container	16	13.3%	19	15.8%
7	Love is a person	37	30.8%	35	29.1%
8	Love is an object	0	0%	26	21.6%
	Total	120	100%	120	100%

- The same expressions of conceptual metaphors of *Love is fate* in the two languages are revealed. Both Westerners and the Asians have beliefs in *love* based on their own religion. From the Buddhist perspective, relationships are formed in life because of destiny and that individuals have little control over their destiny. On the other hand, the Westerners regarded love is the creation by God.

- *Love is an object* is exploited more commonly in Vietnamese 20th century songs while *Love is natural phenomenon* is more commonly found in the English 20th century songs. From cognitive perspective, Vietnamese belongs to the wet-rice culture where people's thinking is based on their experience and they are inclined to perceive *love* as *an object*.

Xin đứng yên trong chiều, phơi tình cho nắng khô mau. (Tình Xót Xa Vừa – Trịnh Công Sơn)
 Tình xa như trời, tình gần như khói mây. (LK Trịnh Công Sơn – Trịnh Công Sơn)

- Whereas the nomadic culture constantly changes locations, switching from one place to another. For nomads “Change is home. Hence, the sun a figure of movement is usually used to refer to *lovers’ image* in the English 20th century songs because the sun is unique and brings light to life Thus, Western people in general and Western composers in particular are in favor of using the image of the natural phenomenon like *the sun, the moon, and the falling stars*.

Your love is like the sun that lights up my whole world. (Your Love – Alamid)

Softly as in a morning sunrise the light of love comes stealing into a newborn day. (Softly as in a morning sunrise – Tony Bennett)