

MOVEMENT TERMS IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE CONCEPTUALLY METAPHORICAL EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE

Ho Trinh Quynh Thu

PhD Candidate, University of Foreign Language Studies, The University of Danang; hotrinhquynhthu@yahoo.com

Abstract - Movement has a tremendous impact on human actions and thoughts because it is closely attached to our daily activities. As a result, terms of movement play an important role in expressing changes in both physical and emotional worlds, including love. Love becomes more vivid and diversified thanks to the terms of movement, which is a result of our investigation under the light of the conceptual metaphor theory raised by Lakoff and Johnson. Examining more than 700 terms of movement in metaphorical expressions of love extracting from 254 English poems and the same number of Vietnamese ones, we have found out that all the key conceptual metaphors of love are similar between English and Vietnamese. Interestingly, a lot of linguistic metaphors are also the same in the two languages. These resemblances may be put in plain words by the universality of metaphor. However, coming from two different cultures, some terms of movement in metaphorical expressions of love are found different between English and Vietnamese.

Key words - metaphor; conceptual metaphor; metaphorical expressions; movement terms; English; Vietnamese

1. Introduction

While other sciences study the nature and the operation mechanisms of love, linguistics studies how the concept of love is expressed via language. In fact, for lack of an adequate vocabulary to clearly explicate and discuss the abstract idea of love, our language utilizes metaphors that draw from concrete experience as a means to relate this emotion in understandable terms [3]. Love is thus perhaps the most highly “metaphorized” emotion concept and more and more attractive to researchers.

Based on the conceptual metaphor theory raised by Lakoff & Johnson [9] and the typical English love metaphors Lakoff & Johnson [9], Lakoff [8] and Kövecses [3] offer, the conceptual metaphor of love has been more examined in monolingual (i.e. English, Chinese, Hungarian, Vietnamese,...) or bilingual (i.e. English versus such another as Chinese, Persian or Vietnamese) data in different registers (e.g., psychology, literature in general, poetry, song lyrics, ...). Several researches have also proved the universality and variation of the conceptual metaphors of love in different languages [4; 13; 14]. However, we have not found any study relating to *movement terms* metaphorically used to conceptualize love, which will be studied in details in this paper.

Among many senses of love, romantic love - the love between male and female - provides one of the most powerful motivations for human action [1]. Therefore in the limitation of this research, we only focus on investigating this kind of love.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Metaphor and metaphorical expressions

Unlike traditional views treating metaphors as a linguistic phenomenon, a product of outstanding talents, cognitive approach shows that metaphor is a ‘property of

concepts’ [5]; and that ‘locus of metaphor is thought’ [8]. It is pervasive in our everyday way of thinking, speaking and acting [8].

Metaphor in the light of cognitive view is called cognitive or conceptual metaphor. Its working mechanism is a cross-domain mapping which is defined as “a fixed set of ontological correspondences between entities in a source domain and entities in a target domain” [7; 8]. The cognitive mappings of metaphors are tightly structured, asymmetric, unidirectional, partial based on daily experience and have a definite structure: TARGET-DOMAIN IS/AS SOURCE-DOMAIN [8] (Figure 1).

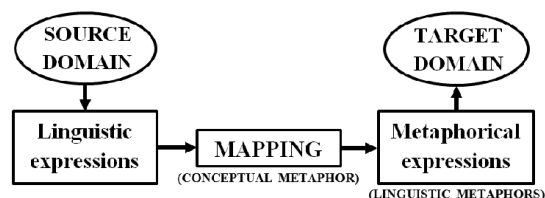


Figure 1. Conceptual mapping

In the mapping, *linguistic metaphors* (or *metaphorical expressions*) are what expressed by language; and *conceptual metaphor* (or *metaphorical concept*) refers to a mental representation describing how two words or expressions from apparently different domains may be associated at an underlying cognitive level. Let us consider the instance of the metaphor LOVE IS/AS A JOURNEY. In this metaphor, “LOVE IS A JOURNEY” is the name of the mapping or conceptual metaphor; LOVE is the target domain, JOURNEY is the source domain; such sentences as *We can't turn back now* [8] and *Đôi ta lên thác xuống ghềnh* (Ca dao) (We are up hill and down dale) [14] are individual linguistic metaphors or metaphorical expressions.

2.2. Identification of metaphorical expressions

Identification of linguistic metaphors is an important step in the procedure for studying metaphors because to know the existence of conceptual metaphors in a discourse, we need to know which linguistic metaphors point to them [5]. It helps ensure the reliability and validity of the study results. In this study, we will apply the approaches to metaphor identification raised by Pragglejaz Group [11] and the extension of Pragglejaz's procedure including four steps: (1) Read the entire text–discourse to establish a general understanding of the meaning. Next, (2) determine the lexical units in the text–discourse. Then (3) take into account what comes before and after the lexical unit, determine if it has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the given context. If yes, decide whether the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it. If yes, (4) mark the lexical unit as metaphorical.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Data collection

The data for investigation are collected from eight English and Vietnamese poetry books with 254 poems in each language. They are all about love, the matter we are interested in and possibly regarded as equivalent in composing time (during the 20th century). In English, they are *Love poems* by Jason Sturmer, *Love poems* (vol.1) by Bobette Bryan, *Love poems* by Nicolas Gordon, *Heart clips* by Alan Harris and *A collection of 100 greatest poems* by many authors. In Vietnamese, there are *Bởi vì ta yêu nhau* by many authors, *Thơ tình nữ thi sĩ Việt Nam* by Kiều Văn, *Xuân Diệu: Ông hoàng của thơ tình yêu* by Hà Minh Đức.

3.2. Research methodology

To carry out this study, we employ descriptive, statistical and comparative methods. They help us analyse, understand and synthesize love metaphorical expressions, discover the cultural features that have an effect on expressing love metaphors and determine the similarities and differences of love metaphorical expressions between English and Vietnamese.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Findings

After investigating the poetry books above, we find over 700 metaphorical expressions of love (encompassing 366 English and 360 Vietnamese ones). They are rather diversified and manifested in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Word classes (WCs) expressing movement in English love metaphorical expressions

WCs	No	Expressions
Verb	244	course, drip, flow, instil, stir, swirl, lock, catch, release, melt, consume, drift, stop, go, come, enter, back, bend, depart, dip, lose, miss, bear, sail, scale, wait, roam, alter, reach, give, receive, accept, soar, step, run, move, follow, pound, linger, ...
Noun	11	turn, turning, journey, giving, exchange, conceal, parting
Adjective	5	wandering, slow, unreachable, given
Preposition	22	into, off to, past, through, from ... to, down, across
Others	84	free from, channel through ... into, fall in, take ... to, skip a beat, fall apart, go away, break from, betray ... out of, bring ... to, carry off, come off, ...

Table 2. Word classes (WCs) expressing movement in Vietnamese love metaphorical expressions

WCs	No	Expressions
Verb	252	thả, vượt khỏi, chất lọc, chảy, chìm, chuốc, lạc, cuộn dốc, hút, tát, tràn, ngã nghiêng, luyến, rơi, xuống xuôi, trộn, đi, đến, ở lại, ủa, duỗi, xuyên, ăn, bỏ, chạy chờ, nằm, nâng, ở lại, ra đi, rón rén, sinh sôi, về, trao bước, dẫn dắt, chen, đổ, đợi, gặp, nổi trôi, ra ...
Noun	2	quán tính, chuyển hành trình
Adjective	8	ào ạt, bất biến, chậm
Others	98	thối bùng, xoay tròn, chìm lặn, băng qua, bỏ ... đi, bước (đến, lùi, ra, tới, vào, xuống), cười sòng, tan vào, đi cùng, đưa về, len vào, quay trở lại, ...

Underlying these expressions are five major conceptual metaphors of love in both English and Vietnamese. They include the source domains namely object, journey, living

organism, container and unity.

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1. Terms of movement in English and Vietnamese metaphorical expressions of love

Movement is defined as the act or process of moving; especially, change of place, position or posture [2]. In this part, we focus on discussing how movement terms are used in linguistic metaphors of love. First, let look at the following example,

- (1) And love *burst into* bloom, with a very special fragrance
(Martin Johnson, *Surprised by love*)

In this verse, the verb “burst” describes the process of changing love shape. The preposition “into” perhaps makes a decisive contribution to this change and the final product is *bloom*. It is movement. The movement may change the look (as in example 1) and the structure inside as well.

- (2) There's a batch of romance
now *simmering* in the heart
(Jason Sturmer, *A holiday for the heart*)

It is interesting to find that via the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A CONTAINER, the love in (2) is expressed as some fluid that is filled in the heart by the term “simmer”. This verb is additionally defined as to cook something so that it is almost boiling [2]. As such, love here may also be conceptualized as fire. When it is said to be simmering, the love is gradually changing its inner structure and towards a complete alternation of its appearance. In other words, the movement of the elements inside love produces the changes of its posture. Yet, it is difficult to realize this moving process until the final product appears.

Contrary to this type of movement, the act of moving from one place or position to another may be easier to realize. Following are some such instances.

- (3) Love loves not lust, but finds its joy in *giving*:
Pleasure, yes, but passion slowly fades.
(Nicholas Gordon, *Please don't mind*)

- (4) We do not need gold coins
when love *comes* without cost
(Jason Sturmer, *About love*)

- (5) We *fell in* love the best way, sight unseen
Pure hunger than nor feast nor flesh could sate,
Two hidden flames fair fed by phrases burning
(Nicholas Gordon, *We met...*)

- (6) The dream seemed impossible,
far away ... *unreachable*.
(Bryan B., *Sailing On Dreams of You*)

In all four stanzas above, there are changes of position of love or of the persons in love. In (3) and (4), love is personified, so it can *come* and *find its joy in giving*. Both the noun “giving” and the verb “come” imply changed positions. If the position of love in (3) alters when it is given from one to another, the love in (4) changes its place by itself. Meanwhile, the movement in (5) and (6) is done by the persons who are in love; and love is the destination they like to reach. The phrasal verb “fall in” describes a

process of moving from a higher position toward the inside of something lower. Accordingly, someone *falls in love*, which arouses an image of that he is sinking inward love. However, whether the result of this love is the goal the couple arrives at or it is just a dream that is never *reachable* as in (6). The missing feeling appears to be a general state of mind that everybody in love may experience once they cannot have their expected love, which explains the reason why we can also find it in Vietnamese.

(7) Dẫu biết lòng vẫn yêu em

Nhưng anh đã *đi* sau một bước.

Anh không nỡ làm khổ đau người *đến* trước.

Đành hẹn em thôi ở kiếp sau này.

(Though my heart still loves you, I have to make a promise for the next life to see you first. I decide to give this opportunity to the person coming to you before me)

(Thanh Tùng, *Đành hẹn*)

Moving terms in this verse are applied to relate lovers' acts, including the verbs *đi* (go) and *đến* (come). When they are in love, the couple always dream of going with each other to the end of their lives. Nevertheless, just a slow-paced step, the dream vanishes, the opportunity has belonged to another.

It can be said that an everlasting love is always couples' desires; however, everything sometimes seems unlike the expectation:

(8) Khi tất thấy sự si mê đã hết

Chợt thấy trái tim em

Như hòn cuội bẽ bàng

Anh *lia* nó *vào* bên đường cát bụi

Ai *nhặt* nó *lên* như trái tim vàng?

(When all passion runs out, I feel ashamed that my heart is like a stone you've thrown to a dusty roadside; but regarded as a gold heart, it is picked up by another.)

(Nguyễn Thị Thu Hương, *Ai?*)

The image "heart" is a symbol of love in many different cultures. It stands for the woman's love in this stanza. This love has just completed an unexpected travel from a man's hand to the roadside and finally to another man's hand. Thanks to the words *lia ... vào* (throw to), *nhặt ... lên* (pick up), we can catch a passive movement the love experiences. Anyway, the end of this love's journey is fairly good; therefore, let receive it without hesitation.

(9) Hãy yêu đi khi tình yêu đã *đến*

(Let's love once love *arrives*)

(Thanh Tùng, *Yêu để đời thêm yêu*)

Different from (8) where it can only change its position due to the impact from its outside, the love in (9) can move without any help. Structuralized as a living organism, love can come. It is verb "đến" (arrive) that gives us such comprehension.

As mentioned above, everyone always desires for an eternal love where they are able to live forever with their beloved. Also in this aspiration, Xuan Dieu conceptualizes love as a unity of wave and shore in which he is waves.

(10) Anh xin làm sóng biển (...)

Cũng có khi *ào ạt*

Như nghiền nát bờ em

(I wish to be waves (...) sometimes impetuous as if they could grind the shore into flour)

(Xuân Diệu, *Biển*)

The Vietnamese adjective "ào ạt" (impetuous) in these lines refers to strong and quick movement. This adjective, on the one hand, tells us one of the features of waves, corresponding to the impetuosity of a man in love. On the other hand, "ào ạt" represents the man's violent love for the woman he loves.

In general, movement terms are used in metaphorical expressions of love are popular in both English and Vietnamese poetry. Due to these terms, love becomes diversified and more concrete. There are many similarities found in English and Vietnamese movement terms used for love expressions. However, born in different cultures, these terms relatively vary in the both languages. We will discuss these problems right in the next part.

4.2.2. Universality and variation of using movement terms in English and Vietnamese love metaphorical expressions

The act of moving can be found in both English and Vietnamese metaphorical expressions of love. The word kind mainly used to describe movement is verb (66.67 percent in English and 70 percent in Vietnamese) though we also discover some other classes of words employed for movement in love linguistic metaphors (see Tables 1, 2).

As mentioned above, movement terms used in linguistic metaphors mainly belong to five concepts in both English and Vietnamese including object, journey, living organism, container and unity (see Table 3). Interestingly, object and journey are two concepts topping the others in both languages. Object is used the most frequently in English and ranks second in Vietnamese. Conversely, journey tops in Vietnamese and follows object in English. These analogies may be illuminated by the universality of conceptual metaphors.

Table 3. Five major conceptual metaphors for love in English and Vietnamese

LOVE IS ...	ENGLISH		VIETNAMESE	
	frequency	%	frequency	%
OBJECT	124	33.88	102	28.33
JOURNEY	105	28.68	121	33.61
LIVING ORGANISM	63	17.21	31	8.61
CONTAINER	24	6.56	29	8.05
UNITY	11	3.01	44	12.22
OTHERS	39	10.66	33	9.17

Surprisingly, besides the source domains, English and Vietnamese also share linguistic metaphors of love that contains movement terms. They may be the motion verbs (e.g., go – đi, come – đến, run – chạy, bring – mang đến...) utilized to personify love; for example,

(11a) Love ... *comes* and *goes* as it decides

(Nicholas Gordon, *Love is like cat*)

(11b) Tình yêu *đến*, tình yêu *đi*, ai biết!

(One guesses if love comes and goes!)

(Xuân Diệu, *Giục giã*)

Love is additionally conceptualized as an object whose position may be changed by the actions of *sending, giving, receiving, taking* in English and *cho, gửi, trao, tặng, nhận, lấy* in Vietnamese.

(12a) I give you my heart

(Bryan, *True love*)

(12b) Ngậm ngùi *tặng* trái tim lưu lạc

(Grieved at giving you my drifting heart)

(Xuân Diệu, *Muộn màng*)

Beside the similarities, there still exist some differences in using movement terms between English and Vietnamese love metaphorical expressions. They may be results of the distinctions of customs, habits and lifestyles that poets in different cultures go through.

Although two languages share the same conceptual metaphors, their frequency is not the same (see Table 3). As mentioned above, while OBJECT metaphor ranks first in English with 33.88 percent, it ranks second in Vietnamese with 28.33 percent. The leader in Vietnamese is JOURNEY metaphor (making up over 33 percent), but it follows OBJECT metaphor in English with 28.68 percent. The third frequent metaphors are LOVE IS A LIVING ORGANISM (accounting for 17.21 percent) in English and LOVE IS A UNITY in Vietnamese (over 12 percent).

These differences may be caused by cultural distinction. Influenced by industrial culture, the Westerners (including Northern American and Western European) are usually in favour of materialism. This explains why the largest part of English love metaphorical expressions comes from the source domain of object. On the other hand, Western cultures conceive love as personal and internal experiences [12]. It is the result of a person's private wishes and desires; that is, love is coveted by virtue of a person's personal benefit. In consequences, once this benefit is not met, love will no longer exist; and the two persons in love will also not be a couple as a unity. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese believe in God and fate [10]. When two persons are in love, they think it is their predestination. They are bound together in love and marriage with a red thread by matchmaker God. Therefore, they tend to make every effort to maintain their relationship despite any difficulties or obstacles. It may be the reason for journey and unity metaphors to be more common in Vietnamese poetry.

In addition, examining the love metaphorical expressions, we discover some interesting distinctive characteristics between English and Vietnamese. Let us look at the following extract as an example where Vietnamese love does an action that cannot be found in English;

(13) Lòng ta hãy ôm trong như giếng tạnh

Nước vẫn sâu khơi mà bờ vắng lạnh;

Tình! Chính người *đến soi mặt*, êm sao!

Thả gàu múc nước, rừng trăng sao.

(My heart is like a well deserted but with fresh water; Love! you come with it to look your face, which makes me pleasant; but your scooping water makes a disturbance here)

(Xuân Diệu, *Con sáo sang sông*)

The actions of “*đến soi mặt*” (coming to look at its face in a well) and “*thả gàu múc nước*” (scooping water out of a well) are imbued with Vietnamese culture. Along with banyan-tree and public court, well is very important and characteristic in Vietnamese traditional villages; it is also the beginning place of love [15]. As a result, it cannot seemingly be found anywhere except Vietnam.

5. Conclusion

As an abstract domain, love is fairly variably described thanks to metaphors with movement terms in both English and Vietnamese. A majority of these terms are expressed by verbs.

Because of the universality of metaphor, love is uncovered to be conceptualized in five similar source domains in the two languages namely object, journey, living organism, unity and container. Besides the same conceptual metaphors, both languages also share many linguistic metaphors, which can be explained by Kovecses's [6] argument: ‘there may be some universal basis for the same metaphors to develop in the diverse languages’.

Despite the universality of love conceptual metaphors in English and Vietnamese, there are still some variations. While following the OBJECT in English, JOURNEY metaphor is the leader in Vietnamese. In addition, some terms of movement used in Vietnamese love metaphorical expressions are not found in English. These differences can be regarded as results of cultural distinctions.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bartels A. and Zeki S., “The neural correlates of maternal and romantic love”, *Neuro Image*, 21, 2004, 1155–1166.
- [2] Encyclopedia Britannica Company, *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th Edition, 2010.
- [3] Kövecses Z., *Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and body in human feeling*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- [4] Kövecses Z., “Universality and Variation in the Use of Metaphor”, *The 2006 and 2007 Stockholm Metaphor Festivals*, Eds. Johannesson & Minugh, 2008, 51–74, Stockholm: Department of English, Stockholm University.
- [5] Kövecses Z., *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, 2nd Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- [6] Kövecses Z., “Metaphor and Culture”, *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica*, 2(2), 2010, 197–220.
- [7] Lakoff G., *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind*, University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- [8] Lakoff G., *The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor*, Second Edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- [9] Lakoff G. and Johnson M., *Metaphors We Live By*, The University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- [10] Norenzayan A., Lee A., “‘It was meant to happen: explaining cultural variations in fate attributions’, *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 98(5), 2010, 702–720.
- [11] Pragglejaz Group, “MIP: A Method for Identifying Metaphorically used Words in Discourse”, *Metaphor and Symbol*, 22(1), 2007, 1–39.
- [12] Tessari H., “Love in words: Experience and conceptualization in the modern English lexicon of love”, *Perspectives on Variation: Sociolinguistic, Historical, Comparative*, Delbecque N., Auwera J. & Geeraerts D. (ed.), 2005, 143–176, Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- [13] Zitu Lv., “Universality and Variation of Conceptual Metaphor of Love in Chinese and English”, *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2012, 355–359.
- [14] Phan Văn Hòa, Hồ Trịnh Quỳnh Thư, “Ảnh dụ ý niệm ‘Tình yêu là cuộc hành trình’ trong tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt”, *Tạp chí Ngôn ngữ và Đời sống*, 9(191), 2011, 15–19.
- [15] <http://vanhoagiaduc.vn/bao-van-hoa-giao-duc-thu-vi-gieng-lang-13265.html>