

CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS FOR IMAGES OF LOVERS IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE POEMS AND SONGS

ÂN DỤ TRI NHẬN VỀ HÌNH ẢNH CÁC CẶP TÌNH NHÂN TRONG THI CA ANH VIỆT

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Abstract - A variety of images of people in love are described in music and poetry through metaphors. In poetry and music of love, metaphors are of great importance because without these stylistic devices, poetry would not be as smooth and romantic as it should be; music could not easily penetrate listeners' souls as it has done. In such a case, how could we touch the beauty of these metaphorical images? Based on the theory of cognitive semantics and conceptual metaphors raised by Lakoff and Johnson [2] as well as the investigation into approximately 350 English and Vietnamese love songs and poems, we find out 14 groups of images which are metaphorically used to describe lovers. By analyzing these groups of images, the paper points out the similarities and differences between them. It is further expected readers will gain deeper understanding of and interest in the beauty of English and Vietnamese love poems and songs through learning how to appreciate metaphorical devices. Finally, this study will enable us to better understand and perceive the translation of metaphorical phenomena in the languages involved.

Key words - conceptual metaphors; lovers; songs; poems; similarities; differences; languages.

1. Introduction

Love begins from the couple of lovers' heart. The man and the woman in love have been attracting a lot of authors in poems and songs. These images are expressed or rather depicted in different ways, especially in metaphorical languages. The following examples can provide us with such ways:

In the poem "Thuyền và biển" of Xuân Quỳnh, the image of lovers is described:

(1) "*Chỉ có thuyền mới hiểu*

Biển mệnh mông đường nào

Chỉ có biển mới biết

Thuyền đi đâu về đâu."

(Xuân Quỳnh, "Thuyền và biển") [13]

How can we recognize the man and the woman when we read this? In common sense, to our thinking nurtured in the oriental culture, men are usually thought to go everywhere meanwhile women stay at home to take care of the family. Based on this feature, we know that "Thuyền" (boat) stands for the man and "Biển" (sea) for the woman (in Xuân Quỳnh's poem).

Xuân Diệu, known as the king of love poems used to depict the images of lovers metaphorically.

(2) "*Anh không xứng là biển xanh*

Nhưng anh muốn em là bờ cát trắng"

(Xuân Diệu, Biển) [9]

Different from Xuân Quỳnh, Xuân Diệu considered himself "biển" and his lover "bờ cát" because "biển", in

Tóm tắt - Nhiều hình ảnh đẹp về tình nhân được mô tả trong thi ca và âm nhạc thông qua ẩn dụ. Trong thi ca, vai trò ẩn dụ được nhân lên đáng kể bởi nếu không có biện pháp nghệ thuật này, thi ca sẽ mất đi sự lãng mạn, âm nhạc không dễ đi vào lòng người như nó vốn dĩ đã có. Dựa vào thuyết ngữ nghĩa học tri nhận và ẩn dụ ý niệm của Lakoff và Johnson [2], khảo sát 350 bài hát và thơ Anh, Việt, chúng tôi tìm ra 14 nhóm hình ảnh được dùng miêu tả các cặp tình nhân. Qua phân tích, chúng tôi nêu lên những điểm tương đồng và khác biệt giữa hai ngôn ngữ trong việc khắc họa hình ảnh các cặp tình nhân qua ẩn dụ. Bài nghiên cứu còn nêu lên những hoạt động của ẩn dụ khắc họa hình ảnh tình nhân trong thi ca Anh, Việt. Cuối cùng, bài viết có nhả ý làm cho người đọc cần trọng hơn về cách hiểu và cách dịch các hiện tượng ẩn dụ khi được sử dụng khá tinh tế trong các tác phẩm thi ca.

Từ khóa - ẩn dụ ý niệm; tình nhân; bài hát; bài thơ; những điểm tương đồng; những điểm khác biệt; ngôn ngữ.

his viewpoint of the things he conceptualized, is more movable and changeable than "bờ cát".

In English, soul and heart can be used to describe both man and woman in love.

(3) "*You're my heart*

You're my soul."

(Modern Talking, You're my heart, you're my soul)

[12]

Portrayed through these images, lovers become so important that one cannot live without the other.

Beside what have been mentioned above, there is a variety of images that are metaphorically employed to describe people in love.

This research paper would reveal some useful information about conceptual metaphors used to depict the images of lovers in English and Vietnamese poems and songs. Firstly, the paper, based on the data, will see how and what lovers are 'called' in poetry and music in English and Vietnamese. It then indicates/presents the similarities and differences they have when they are metaphorically conceptualized in the mapping patterns. Finally, the article examines if these results are meaningful for understanding the metaphorical phenomena and translate them into the respective language.

2. Sampling and Classifying

2.1. Sampling

In both English and Vietnamese songs and poems, we can see a lot of images indicating lovers as travelers.

(4) *You're **apart of** me, I'm **apart of** you, **wherever** you may **travel** whatever we **go through***

(Glenn Frey, Part of me, part of you) [12]

Or:

(5) *Người từ trăm năm*

Về khơi tình động

Ta chạy vòng vòng

Ta chạy mòn chân

(Nguyễn Tất Nhiên, Khúc tình buồn) [8]

Love is a journey, so lovers have to travel on this journey to look for happiness. In such a case, we read about 350 poems and songs, picking out more than 470 metaphorical mapping patterns in English and in Vietnamese to find out how lovers are depicted in poetry and music in English and Vietnamese.

2.2. Classifying

The data are sorted into groups in which images of lovers are metaphorically described. They help discover what similarities and differences images of lovers in each language embrace when they are metaphorically conceptualized in the mapping patterns.

3. Findings and Discussions

It is said that love poems and love songs are the wonderful land for the seed of metaphors to plant and grow up. In these types of art, authors have chances to discover the beauty of metaphors because each has had different emotions and life experiences. Therefore, they can create a variety of works that contain various metaphorical images. Through classifying the data collected, we have found out 14 groups of images in which lovers are portrayed diversely.

3.1. Lovers are travelers

In a journey, travelers are the ones who carry out the action of traveling. They get their way, their start and destination. They need means of transports to help them quickly reach their finish point. On the way, they also meet a lot of obstacles. Now, let's take some examples to see how the metaphor "lovers are travelers" is used in English songs and poems.

(6) *Let me **take** you on an **escapade***

(Janet Jacksonn, Escapade) [12]

The lovers as travelers go on the same way to their happy paradise. In another example, the woman invites her lover to go with her to somewhere that can be a place to grow the seed of happiness.

(7) *Anh có đi cùng em*

Đến những miền đất lạ

(Xuân Quỳnh, Mùa hoa doi) [13]

In (7), the land where the woman invites her man to accompany her is full of happiness. This is the destination that lovers are looking forward to.

3.2. Lovers are soldiers

The metaphor "lovers are soldiers" is used in English

songs and poems to show the difficulties lovers encounter on the way to achieve one's heart.

(8) *There's no **fight** you can't **fight** this **battle** of love with me*

(Bee Gees, You win again) [13]

In this sample, we can see that the lover tries to do everything as long as she can achieve her aim: conquer one's heart. At last, she makes it become true. In Vietnamese, sorrow in love is considered a wound:

(9) *Người vừa tặng ta **vết thương** đau ngọt ngào*

(Diên An, Vết thương cuối cùng) [10]

3.3. Lovers are plants

When a man falls in love with a woman, the woman in his eyes is always beautiful and charming. He wants to consider his flame something beautiful and precious. Plants like trees or flowers are used in this context to describe the woman.

(10) *My **flower**, my precious scented **petal***

*So full of loving and **colours**.*

(John London, Loving embrace) [5]

In the author's mind, his lover is structuralized in terms of a flower with petals which is scented and has colors. She is so precious that the author wants to own forever. Lover is conceptualized as rose not only in thought of Western people but of Vietnamese people also":

(11) *Em thì vẫn là **nụ hồng** bé nhỏ*

*Anh sợ làm **hoa úa rụng** dưới chân*

(Minh Luân, Nụ hồng thâm lặng) [8]

The girl is just like a little rose. The rose needs watering; it means that the girl needs caring for by her lover. The image of lover here is so pretty and fragile that she needs protecting.

3.4. Lovers are players

When love is regarded as a game, lovers become players in the game. They take part in the game of love with joy.

(12) *Love is a fast-paced **game** that changes quickly.*

*One moment you can be on top of the **game**.*

(My Obsession, The game of love) [12]

In a game, the player feels absolutely fantastic when he or she wins the game. In love, the lover has the same feeling if he or she achieves someone's heart. On the contrary, the player will be disappointed if he or she loses the game. And so is the lover:

(13) *Bây giờ anh có lẽ*

*Xin làm **người tình thua***

(Nguyễn Tất Nhiên, Chuyện tình buồn) [8]

In this game of love, the man became the loser because he was not able to win the woman's heart.

3.5. *Lovers are natural objects*

As we know, there are a lot of natural objects in the universe. Without these natural objects, there would not be the universe. Similarly, without lovers, there would not be love at all. In this type of metaphor, we can divide the samples into small groups of images: ***Lover is the sun, Lover is the moon, Lover is a star, Lovers are natural phenomena.*** Let's consider the metaphor Lover-as-the-sun.

The sun plays an important role in creating life on earth.

(14) *Em là tia nắng giữa đời anh đêm đông lạnh tàn*

(Vũ Ngọc Quang, Khát vọng tình yêu) [10]

The man regarded his life as a long winter night. His woman came as sunlight that makes his life meaningful. In English, there is a similar way to express the importance of lover in one's life:

(15) *You were the dawn breaking the night, the promise of morning light*

(Carpenters, Only yesterday) [12]

Night would be endless if the dawn did not appear. The dawn dispels the lonely night and brings sunlight to bright everything in the world. Similarly, the woman comes to fill her man's life with a lot of hopes and beliefs.

3.6. *Lovers are dreamers*

When people fall in love, they think about each other all time even when they sleep. The metaphor ***Lovers are dreamers*** is used to express this idea.

(16) *Our dreams are young and we both know they take us where we want to go.*

(Bee Gees, Nothing's gonna change my love for you) [12]

In this sample, people in love always have a dream of a happy life. They think that their dreams have enough power to take them wherever they want to go. Sometimes, the border between consciousness and unconsciousness is too difficult to recognize.

(17) *Lòng em nhớ đến anh*

Cả trong mơ còn thức

(Xuân Quỳnh, Sóng) [13]

The woman in love has always been thinking about her lover; she cannot control her thought so she is deep into thinking about him even when she falls asleep.

3.7. *Lovers are angels*

Angels do not exist in real life. However, it is believed that angels are beautiful and bring good luck to us. When a person falls in love with somebody, he or she considers his or her lover an angel.

(18) *Baby, come on and take me into*

That wonder land where lovers go

(Doobie Brother, Take me in your arms) [12]

In Vietnamese, poets also use the ***Lover as an angel*** metaphor to describe lovers:

(19) *Đôi lứa thần tiên suốt một ngày*

(Huy Cận, Áo trắng) [11]

It is difficult to express how happy they feel when they are side by side. The author makes the readers be able to imagine this feeling by using the image “*Đôi lứa thần tiên*”.

3.8. *Lovers are fires*

When a man falls in love with a woman, there is a passion between them. This feeling is so strong that they consider their mate something flammable. When observing his lover sleeping, Trịnh Công Sơn wrote:

(20) *Ngủ đi em đôi môi lửa cháy*

(Trịnh Công Sơn, Em hãy ngủ đi) [10]

When sleeping, the woman in love is so sexy that her lover considers her lips fire. Through the image “*Đôi môi lửa cháy*”, we can see that the author found his lover intensely desirable. Another example in English also proves this point of view:

(21) *I can feel your burning passion*

(Joys, Hey, hello) [12]

This sample proves the same opinion that lovers always have passions to get closer to each other. Therefore, they can feel this passion burning inside their partner.

3.9. *Lovers are unity-makers*

It is believed that God created the man and then He took a piece of his bone to create the woman. Woman is a part of man. Woman and man are considered two halves. Two halves which match each other create a unity.

(22) *Apart neither of us is whole*

Together we are one.

(Patches, We are one) [5]

Or:

(23) *Có một nửa đang đi tìm một nửa*

(Thạch Quỳ, Không đề) [11]

One half is looking for another half to make a perfect unity. When falling in love with each other, two lovers always wish to merge into one, to share their life in weal or woe forever, and consider them as natural rules.

3.10. *Lovers are power creators*

Love has its own power that can attack someone who is in love. By whom is the power created? It is the lover who can do this. There are two types of power: natural power and physical power.

In the poem “*Biển*”, Xuân Diệu wrote:

(24) *Cũng có khi ào ạt*

Như nghiêng nát bờ em

(Xuân Diệu, Biển) [9]

In this example, the man considers himself tide and his honey the beach. In love, the man usually wants to show his stormy passion for his lover. In English, the power that people in love create may be described in many different ways:

(25) *We can make the wind blow*

(Diana Ross, Experience) [12]

Words of natural power such as wind, tide, rain, storms... are metaphorically used to describe images of lovers both in English and in Vietnamese. These images are valuable to show the power of love.

3.11. Lovers are desire in sexual relationship

As we have discussed in the semantic feature of lovers, sexual relationship is an essential part to connect two halves into one unity. When two people fall in love with each other, they have strong desire to get nearer. Talking about the images of lovers, we cannot deny the sexual desire that they show via music and poetry. The desire of having sexual relationship of lovers can be seen in both English and in Vietnamese.

(26) *I hold on to your body, and feel each move you make*

(Ricasdo Caliente, The power of love) [12]

Or

(27) *Hôn em ngàn thuở chưa xuê*

Áp yêu xương thịt gặng kẻ tâm linh

(Xuân Diệu, Hôn) [9]

Words such as “touch”, “hold on to your body” and “kisses” are widely used to manifest the sexual desire in both languages. “Kiss”, however, is the image repeated most often.

3.12. Lovers are worldviewers in their ways

When discussing about new meaning of love, Lakoff and Johnson have listed a lot of entailments for this metaphor: “Love reflects how you see the world”. We can entail “Feelings of lovers affect how they reflect the world”. In an English poem, the author reflected the world so pessimistically when he supposed he had lost his soul-mate:

(28) *Without you I would be like:*

The ocean without water

The night sky minus the stars,

The world without people,

(Annika Siemens, Without you) [5]

In Kiều, Nguyễn Du wrote the way Kim Trọng felt about the time:

(29) *Ba thu dọn lại một ngày dài ghê*

(Nguyễn Du, Truyện Kiều) [6]

Kim Trọng had to suffer from missing his lover, so he felt a day as long as three years.

3.13. Lovers are those who must be patient

In music as well as poetry, the images of lovers also show “Lovers must be patient”:

(30) *Anh đứng như trồng chẳng chịu đi*

Nhớ nhung vun đức đức kiên trì

(Xuân Diệu, Đứng chờ em) [9]

The man in this situation was waiting for his lover in the sunset. Many times he saw someone who looked like his lover but she still did not come. It is the patience that supported him to win her heart. When the melody of the

song “Right here waiting for you” is sung, listeners find it moving when hearing:

(31) *Wherever you go, whatever you do, I will be right here waiting for you*

(Richard Marx, Right here waiting for you) [12]

The patience is a means to help one overcome much difficulty to achieve other’s love. Without patience, how could people keep love always warm and enduring forever?

3.14. Lovers are those who devote to each other

We cannot deny that love demands sacrifice which proves one is ready to devote to the happiness of the other. The sacrifice is sometimes a determination to overcome any obstacles as long as they can be with their beloved:

(31) *If I crossed a million oceans just to be with you,*

(Shakin’ Steven, Because I love you) [12]

The man in this song is willing to do anything as long as he achieves the heart of the woman he loves. He does not care how difficult and dangerous it is. The determination to be with his lover is so strong that he can cope with all challenges. Sometimes, the sacrifice is shown not only in special situations but also in daily activities. Xuân Diệu wrote:

(32) *Anh thức nhìn em ngủ*

Anh canh giấc cho em

(Xuân Diệu, Anh thương em khi ngủ) [9]

The man wants to stay up to take care of his lover while she is sleeping. Normally, the female sex is weak, and women in love are weaker. They need defending by their lover. Men are always considered the strong ones. They have responsibility to protect their lover. The devotion to love creates many beautiful and romantic images of lovers in music and poetry.

4. Similarities and differences

4.1. Similarities

From what have been mentioned, we can recognize several similarities in the way authors depict the image of lovers in songs and poems in English and Vietnamese. Firstly, something that is unique and precious such as heart, soul, the sun... is commonly used to refer to lovers because lover is unique and important to those who fall in love. Secondly, the beauty of a female lover is described with images such as the moon, stars, flowers, angel... which embody fragility, attractiveness and demand for being cherished. Lovers are also considered travelers, players, dreamers, soldiers in the two languages. Moreover, it is believed that lovers create the unity, which is supported by numerous poetic and musical images. Finally, typical characters of lovers involving devotion, patience, desire are described with a variety of lively illustrations.

4.2. Differences

In English, **Lover-as-Player** and **Lover-as-Soldier** metaphors are commonly used. The investigation shows

that people may be interested in challenging love with full of risk and danger. When regarding love as a game or a battle, people in love have a chance to take part in this game or battle with great excitement. They may win or lose. Words such as “*game, battle, win, lose, strategies*”, therefore, are popularly used in this sense. In Vietnamese, we seldom see lovers be depicted in this way. **Lover-as-Soldier** metaphor is just used to express the sorrow one has to suffer when he loses his lover.

In Vietnamese, there are a wide range of image pairs of images which are metaphorically used in poems and songs to describe lovers such as “Thuyền/biển”, “Bướm/hoa”, “Mây/núi”, “Thuyền/bến”... We can see that the first ones are movable meanwhile the second ones are static. The movable images are considered male lover and the static ones female lover. In English, it is difficult to find out same descriptions. Men and women have had equal rights for a long time. Women are strong enough to be independent of men, and they also have the demand to seek for love. These pairs of images are not suitable to describe male and female lovers in English music and poetry.

5. Conclusion

Based on a corpus of 350 English and *Vietnamese* love songs and poems, we can find out 14 typical groups of metaphorical images to describe lovers in music and poetry.

Both similar and different features of conceptual metaphors for images of lovers in English and Vietnamese poems and songs make us think that based on these metaphors, lovers appear in songs and poems diversely, which makes readers much more interested in reading and listening to them. In addition, the language in music and poetry is language of the art. It requires authors to be careful in choosing the images that can create values of art. Conceptual metaphors are the best choice for this.

The more beautiful images are used in music and poetry, the more art effect these works bring. Furthermore, to understand conceptual metaphors used to describe images of lovers, we must refer to the role of cultures, aesthetics habits and customs in each society. These factors have influenced the way authors choose images that are close to our daily life. Finally, each poet or music composer has their own living experiences which certainly affect how they decide on the images in use. Therefore, readers and listeners should be aware of these factors so that they can have a thorough understanding about images of lovers metaphorically described in music and poetry.

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