

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Research problem

Vietnamese people, like others in eastern cultures, are believed to have a way of “talking around the bush”, especially when their talk relates to emotions. However, it is widely known that Vietnamese young people no longer keep their traditional customs since they are more and more introduced to a western life (Ellis 1995). Even so, different Vietnamese values of the past are still recognized, more vaguely and less commonly perhaps, in contemporary songs and poems with the same form of “hidden comparison” as in the old days, that is metaphor and metonymy (Nguyễn Như Ý 2001:18).

According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphor is “pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action” (1980:3) or as Lakoff and Turner put it, “a tool so ordinary that we use it unconsciously and automatically, with so little effort that we hardly notice it” (1989: xi). The questions, then, are what are the conceptual metaphors and metonymys that structure Vietnamese thought in order to express emotions, or more specifically, the emotion of love? And are there any changes in terms of worldview reflected by the way Vietnamese people think regarding this emotional concept?

Even though the study of metaphors of love either in folk songs or in *Thơ mới* (Modern poems) is not a new issue in Vietnamese (Phan Hồng Xuân 2001a and b; Nguyễn Minh Bắc 2001; Hà Quang Năng 2000), to see it in the light of Cognitive Semantics and Anthropological Linguistics is new. By using Lakoff and Johnson’s theory of conceptual metaphor and metonymy, this thesis will show that the structure

of metaphor/metonymy in folk and contemporary literature are both rooted in culture. It will next describe the values reflected in the two different time spans corresponding to the two above periods of literature. Palmer's framework (1996) is used as well as to point out that no matter how life changes nowadays from the old days Vietnamese people still maintain their own traditional values either in the same old form or in a new variation.

1.1 Objectives of the study

The first objective of this study is to review the literature in order to understand theoretical models of cognitive semantics and anthropological linguistics. Secondly, I analyze conceptual metaphors and metonymys used both in Vietnamese folk and contemporary literature. Thirdly, I describe the worldview reflected by these metaphors and metonymys expressing the emotional concept of love in the past and in the present. Fourthly, I give a comparison between the two periods of time regarding the Vietnamese conception of love.

1.2 Data collection

Data for this thesis are included from two different forms, songs and poems. I started with collecting love songs and poems from different music CDs, as well as from the internet and was able to find 67 contemporary songs and 13 poems with potential conceptual metaphors and metonymies of different kinds. From that, I narrowed down to those that have conceptual metaphors and metonymies of love. Dictionaries, books and collections of folksongs in Vietnamese are the other main resources for my data of folk literature.

1.3 Analysis procedure

I started by collecting data from different resources: books or collections of folk songs, Vietnamese dictionaries, music CDs or tapes and websites. After this, the data

were grouped into two categories, folk and contemporary literature. This is because the songs and poems of each period reflect its own unique way of conceptualizing emotions rooted in conceptual metaphors and metonymies. In each category, I categorized the data depending on the concrete domains shared by different examples. The next step was to analyze the conceptual metaphors in each group. Then, values of the worldview reflected in the use of metaphors or metonymy will be studied. Finally, I look at the comparison in terms of worldview values in the two periods of time corresponding to folk and contemporary literature.

1.4 Brief overview of the theory

The theory of conceptual metaphor suggested by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) shows the strong relationship between language and reality by the use of metaphor in both folk and contemporary literature. Metaphor, as Lakoff and Johnson explain, is “principally a way of conceiving one thing in terms of another and its primary function is understanding” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:36). In other words, metaphor helps us understand an abstract concept in terms of a concrete thing. Metonymy, different from metaphor, indicates a process of using an entity to stand for another in the same domain (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:36). Metonymy also has a function of providing understanding as metaphor does.

In addition, since “art is often a guide to the worldview and maze ways of the people, showing us how they see their relationships to nature, to one another and to the supernatural” (Hiebert 1976:401), the analysis of metaphor and metonymy in folk and contemporary literature will, no doubt, reveal more or less parts of a picture of worldview existing in Vietnamese culture. Palmer (1996) also emphasizes a strong connection between languages and worldviews. This relationship is seen by the fact that language does not reflect only the surrounding physical world but also different images in speakers’ and listeners’ minds, “images that may be given by a culture in its literature, its arts, or its daily discourse” (Palmer 1996:115).

Briefly, Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory will be the foundation for the analysis of metaphor and metonymy while Palmer's (1996) writing gives the framework for the reflection of values from linguistic phenomenon, i.e. metaphor and metonymy in this thesis.

1.5 Overview of thesis

Chapter 1 gives a brief overview of this thesis, while chapter 2 presents the theoretical frameworks and relevant literature used in the study. Chapter 3 is the analysis of metaphor and metonymy in both folk and contemporary Vietnamese literature. Worldview reflection and its comparison between the two periods of time can be found in chapter 4. Lastly, chapter 5 summarizes the findings of the thesis and suggests some further research relating to this topic.

1.6 Limitations of thesis

First, though folk literature or oral literature includes a wide variety of forms such as folk tales, dictions, proverbs and fairy tales (Nguyễn Đăng Liêm 1969), I will use only folk songs or *ca dao*, as data for folk literature in this study. The study, therefore, does not cover the whole range of oral literature.

Secondly, Vietnamese *ca dao* is said to be "the most romantic love poems, which are the standard form for the modern love poems later" (Vũ Ngọc Phan 1999:54). In other words, it reflects various kinds of love in Vietnamese people's lives, such as romantic love, love for family, love for nature, love for villages, love for country, love for peace, love for farm work, etc. Due to the limited scope of this thesis, only three types of love will be in focus, those being, love for homeland, love for family and romantic love.

Finally, all of the folk and contemporary songs or poems will be analyzed from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, which will help to find out the underlying structure of metaphor in the data, not just to understand the meaning of metaphor as is the case of literary criticism.

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