

METAPHOR OF LOVE IN ENGLISH SONGS

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Rational

Metaphor is a typical and effective rhetoric device used to make the figurative imagines in communication. Cognitive linguists have found that metaphor, especially conceptual metaphor, is a matter of thought and a cognitive device for humans to conceptualize abstract domains. Hence, metaphors are “not purely a subject matter of stylistics, they are an inevitable part of our conscious as well as unconscious thinking and acting, even though we are not aware of their existence. It is through them we get a chance of wording our inner thoughts as well as endowing words with a particular meaning.” (Popaditch, 2004, p.2)

Human emotion is always a very subtle and complicated phenomenon to be expressed by language. On another hand, feelings, especially love, are an endless inspiration for any authors. Various rhetoric devices are used to describe love, using among them metaphor appears to be an effective way.

This research intends to revise metaphors of love in English discussed in some semantic studies. The research also suggests a procedure of identifying, perceiving and comprehending metaphors of love in some English love songs.

2. Objectives

The study focuses on the two following questions:

1. What are some typical metaphors of love often used in English in some previous studies?
2. What are basis of these metaphors corresponding with the concept of love in some English love songs?

3. Methodology

This study tends to be in form of qualitative research with heuristic objectives and analytic approaches. Initially, materials related to metaphor and conceptual

metaphor are reviewed to build up a theoretical background for the research. Secondly, some data are collected, classified and analyzed. Lastly, the result from analyzing process was systematized to achieve a more general conclusion.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. What is metaphor?

The word “metaphor” originates from Greek word *metaphora*, which means to “carry over” or to “transfer”. According to Laffok and Johnson (1980), “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (p.5). The Vietnamese linguist Cù Đình Tú claims that “it is the phenomena in which one thing is represented by another due to their characteristic similarities or the logical connection between two things”, (1983, p.270).

In short, it can be said that metaphor is one kind of comparisons which is used to compare between two things based on their similarity without appearance of the comparative words such as “like” or “as”. Or in other words, metaphor is the transference of meaning from one object to another based on *similarities* between these two. In the point of view of cognitive linguistics, metaphor is a conceptual projection whereby one experiential domain (*target*) is partially understood in terms of another experiential domain (*source*) included in the same common experiential domain (*similarity*).

2. Metaphors of love

There are several studies and article focusing on the love metaphors. For instance, Richart Nordquist on his article *Love is a Metaphor*, lists 99 metaphors of love found in several literature works. These metaphors ranges from common ones such as a rose, a star, a journey, a flame to unusual things like a razor, a disease or a dog. The article on the site www.xamuel.com, on the other hand, based on the author’s experience, names 10 metaphors consisting a thrill ride, a fine wine, a garden, a battlefield, the air, an experiment, a destroyer, life, autumn and an adventure. However, it should be noticed that these two articles mainly enumerate the metaphors rather than analyze them.

Thao, Tran (2010) on her thesis made a comparison between the semantics of metaphors of love in English and Vietnamese songs. Based on the classification of Lakoff and Johnson in the book “Metaphors we live by”, she divided the instances into two main groups based on the traditional and modern aspects. By the traditional aspects, love is described like an object (*Happiness is a warm gun* – The Beatles), a creature (*her love is dead*) or a natural phenomenon (the sun, the star...). The modern metaphors of love combine a journey, a paradise, a game, and a fight. Afterward, the author discussed some differences on the way using metaphors in English and Vietnamese. This is an interesting study, yet the examples cited seem to be limited, with the majority are in Vietnamese.

Another research on metaphors of love was written by Irina Popaditch (2004). She lists all structural metaphors, namely Love is war, is madness, is magic, a patient, a journey, a possession, love is heat, is a creation, a frangible object, a unity, love is wine, and love is a cult. This is quite an informative study for anyone interested in theory of metaphors. However, because the research seems to pay more attention to the theory than the analysis, hence the examples are not carefully analyzed. In addition, the differences between metaphors of the two languages were not deeply investigated, so the distinguishing between the uses of metaphors of two languages is not clearly enough.

The last research mentioned in this paper is the one composed by Le Thuy Linh. She interested in the intensity of love in English and Vietnamese, with the main scope is the metaphor “passion / love is fire”. The metaphors are explored based on the circle existence of fire, from the beginning, different degrees of burning, maintaining until the end of the fire. The body heat is also compared with the heat of the fire. One strong point of the research is that all the instances were carefully examined and the differences are remarkable. The study is successful in providing a very interesting and convincing point of view and is a very useful reference for further research.

III. TYPICAL METAPHORS OF LOVE IN ENGLISH LOVE SONGS

As mentioned before, metaphors used to describe love are so diverse. The study just concentrated on some of the most popular metaphors only.

Love is a natural phenomenon

The most common metaphors of love are natural phenomena. Many natural sources like the sun, star or the moon are used to express the power as well as the importance of love. Let's take an instance:

Who sings of all of love's eternity

Whose shines so bright

In all the songs of love's unending spells

(Tangerine Dream - *Love by the sun*)

This metaphor is built based on the similarity in function of both objects: the sun and the lover. The sun lights up the earth, while the lover lights up the life of the singer, makes it warmer and more colorful. And because the sun is eternal, the singer hopes that the magic of love will go with him until the end.

Love is a fire

Another common metaphor is the fire, or flame, which seems to be the most vivid illustrating the intensity of love. That can be called as passion, which is a very strong feeling of love or sexual attractions. According to Oxford dictionary, "fire" in literal meaning is "combustion or burning... typically give out bright light, heat and smoke." To extent, fire is "the state of mind with fervent spirit and boiling enthusiasm" (Tinh 134). "Love" here is the target domain from the source "fire".

Girl, girl, girl

You gonna set me on fire

My brain is flaming

I don't know which way to go

(Elvis Presley - *Burning love*)

The song of the King of Pop describes the extreme strength of love. The love starts, provokes the emotions lying deep inside. It makes people too excited and enthusiastic to do anything.

But love is not always so strong. Sometimes it is very gentle like a flame is slowly sparked.

Is this burning an eternal flame

(The Bangle – *Eternal Flame*)

This song is like a whisper of a young girl falling in love for the first time. She feels the love kindles in her heart, and wonders if her darling feels the same. The imagine of flame refers to something very warm and bright, but easy to die if there is nothing responding to it.

Love is a journey

This metaphor is not only famous in the theory of Lakoff and Johnson, but popular in English love song as well. The two lovers who are in a relationship sometimes are compared with two travelers sharing a journey.

One day, when I am able to love you

I'll come back from wherever I've been to

(Carpenters, *Someday*)

Sometimes, love becomes a traveler who goes away:

I don't know why, you said goodbye

Just let me know you didn't go forever my love

(Danbyrd – *Boulevard*)

In this song, the separation of the two lovers is compared with a journey, which is becoming far away from the singer. However, the singer still hopes that the love doesn't go forever, that his lover may come back one day.

Love is a creature

On the eyes of people who are in love, sometimes love becomes a living thing:

Don't tell me that love's not waiting for us.

(Tokyo Square- That is love)

But without carefulness, it may pass away:

And yet you don't believe her when she says her love is dead.

(Carpenters – *Someday*)

Like a creature, love is born with the stir of two hearts, and when it is over, love cannot exist. With the word “dead”, the listener can feel all the feelings of hurt and upset of the character.

IV. CONCLUSION

In this essay we have revised some metaphors of love in English. Also some metaphors in English love songs are extracted and analysed as illustration. From the beginning of the essay we assumed that feelings and emotions, love being one of them, are extremely difficult to comprehend. However, along with the strength of melody, the use of metaphor makes the love in each song become more lively and touchable to the listener. Due to the limit of time, the studies revised in this paper is limited, also there are still many amazing metaphors used in English love song remaining unrevealed. However, hopefully the research can be a useful reference for further research in future.

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