

A Study on Metaphorical Conceptualizations of Figurative Languages Used in the Song "Hello Vietnam" by Pham Quynh Anh

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Abstract: This article delves into the metaphorical conceptualizations present in the emotionally charged song "Hello Vietnam." Through a detailed analysis of the figurative language employed in the lyrics, the study aims to unravel the underlying meanings and representations embedded within the verses. By employing metaphor theory and thematic analysis, the article sheds light on how metaphors play a pivotal role in shaping the emotional depth and cultural expressions of this poignant musical composition. The findings of the study reveal that the song "Hello Vietnam" predominantly uses metaphors related to *themes of love, longing, and connection*. These metaphors serve as a central element of the song's lyrical composition. It is also noted that the metaphors used in the song greatly enhance its emotional impact and overall meaning. For instance, metaphors of longing and nostalgia may evoke a sense of empathy and emotional connection with the listener. The finding also reveals that the metaphors in "Hello Vietnam" reflect cultural and historical themes related to Vietnam. This could include references to historical events, cultural symbols, or traditions that are deeply ingrained in Vietnamese culture.

Key words: Metaphorical conceptualizations, figurative languages, musical composition

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the study

The study of conceptual metaphor has its roots in the fields of linguistics, cognitive science, and philosophy. It gained prominence through the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, particularly in their influential book "Metaphors We Live By," published in 1980. In the late 20th century, cognitive linguistics emerged as a new paradigm in linguistics, emphasizing the role of mental structures and cognitive processes in language. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson played a pivotal role in shaping this field. They argued that metaphors are not merely linguistic devices but fundamental to human thought and understanding of abstract concepts. They introduced the concept of "conceptual metaphor," which linked concrete experiences (source domains) to abstract concepts (target domains). Lakoff, Johnson, and other scholars continued to explore and expand upon the concept of conceptual metaphor. They investigated how metaphors vary across cultures and languages and how they influence various aspects of cognition, communication, and culture. The study of conceptual metaphor has extended beyond linguistics to fields such as psychology, cognitive science, anthropology, literature, and communication studies. Researchers have applied conceptual metaphor theory to understand topics ranging from political discourse to advertising. While widely influential, the study of conceptual metaphor has also faced critiques and refinements. Scholars have explored issues like cultural diversity in metaphors, the embodied nature of metaphor, and the role of cultural frames in shaping metaphoric thinking. Overall, the study of conceptual metaphor has had a profound impact on our understanding of how language and thought are intertwined. It has provided valuable insights into the cognitive processes underlying metaphorical thinking and has broadened our appreciation of the role metaphors play in shaping human cognition, communication, and culture.

Understanding conceptual metaphor is crucial for language learning because it helps learners grasp the deeper structure of a language and its cultural nuances. Lakoff & Johnson, (1980) asserts that conceptual metaphors often serve as a bridge between abstract concepts and concrete, everyday experiences. When language learners understand these metaphors, they can more easily acquire and remember new vocabulary related to abstract ideas. For instance, understanding the metaphor "Time is Money" in English aids in learning

time-related vocabulary. The knowledge of conceptual metaphor can facilitate natural communication. Many idiomatic expressions and figures of speech in a language are rooted in conceptual metaphors. By recognizing and using these metaphors, language learners can engage in more natural and nuanced conversations with native speakers (Kövecses, 2005).

In the realm of music, certain compositions transcend their sonic boundaries to become cultural touchstones, resonating with listeners across time and space. "Hello Vietnam" by Pham Quynh Anh stands as one such remarkable creation. This haunting melody encapsulates a myriad of emotions and stories, underscoring the power of music to encapsulate the essence of a collective experience. With its evocative lyrics and captivating metaphorical expressions, "Hello Vietnam" has etched itself into the hearts of many, serving as a poignant emblem of longing, nostalgia, and a deep-seated connection to one's homeland.

As we delve into the intricacies of "Hello Vietnam," it becomes evident that the song's resonant power emanates not solely from its melodic beauty but also from its masterful utilization of metaphorical conceptualizations. These figurative expressions, skilfully woven into the lyrics, serve as windows into a world where emotions are artfully distilled into words, melodies, and imagery. To understand the song's metaphorical richness is to unearth the layers of emotion and cultural depth that make "Hello Vietnam" a testament to the enduring connection between art, language, and the human heart.

1.2. Significance of the study

Conceptual metaphor theory has made notable contributions to language proficiency development, particularly in the fields of language acquisition, language teaching, and language use. Theory of conceptual metaphor suggests that abstract concepts are often understood through more concrete and familiar concepts. This idea can aid language learners in grasping and internalizing new vocabulary and abstract concepts by connecting them to concepts they already understand. Otherwise, understanding the metaphors that underlie language can improve learners' vocabulary and comprehension skills. By recognizing common metaphors in a language, learners can gain a deeper understanding of how words are used in various contexts. For example, the metaphor "*argument is war*" can help learners understand phrases like "He attacked my argument" or "She defended her position." Studies confirm that proficiency in language involves not only knowing words and grammar rules but also using language effectively to convey ideas. Metaphors are an essential aspect of effective communication because they allow speakers and writers to express complex or abstract concepts vividly. Language learners who understand how metaphors work can communicate more effectively in both everyday conversations and academic writing (Charteris-Black, 2004; Cameron, 2003; Forceville, 2008).

"Hello Vietnam" by Pham Quynh Anh encapsulates a range of profound emotional themes and sentiments, weaving a tapestry of nostalgia, longing, and a deep connection to one's homeland. The song delves into the complex emotions experienced by those who have been separated from their roots due to circumstances beyond their control, particularly against the backdrop of the Vietnam War and its aftermath. At its core, the song evokes a sense of longing and yearning for the homeland left behind. The lyrics paint a vivid picture of distance, both physical and emotional, and the ache that accompanies the separation. Through the metaphorical language employed, the song becomes a vessel for expressing the depth of emotions that arise from being far from one's place of origin. Embedded within the song is a theme of absence and presence. The lyrics conjure a palpable feeling of emptiness, a void that can only be filled by the familiarity of one's homeland. This sentiment resonates with anyone who has experienced the bittersweet pangs of nostalgia for a time and place now distant. In "Hello Vietnam," metaphors open a gateway to emotions that might otherwise remain elusive, forging a profound connection between the artist, the song, and the hearts of those who listen.

The analysis of conceptual metaphorical language helps learners of English language understand in depth the use of figurative languages in poetry documents. It enables learners to transcend the ordinary and reach into the extraordinary realm of human emotion. It transforms the ineffable into the tangible, the abstract into the relatable, and the distant into the intimately close.

1.3. Purposes of the study

The primary purpose of the research was to identify and analyze the metaphorical expressions and conceptualizations within the lyrics of the song. This involves systematically going through the song's lyrics to identify instances of metaphors, similes, and other figurative language. The second purpose of the study was to investigate how these metaphors and figurative expressions contribute to the cognitive and emotional impact of the song. This involves understanding how metaphors shape our thinking and perception of the song's subject matter. Finally, the study investigates whether the metaphors used in the song are culturally and historically grounded. By conducting a thorough investigation into whether the metaphors used in the song "Hello Vietnam" are culturally and historically grounded, we gain a deeper understanding of the song's meaning and significance.

1.4. Research questions

With the above mentioned purposes, the study addresses the following research questions;

- 1.4.1. *What are the predominant metaphorical conceptualizations found in the song "Hello Vietnam"?*
- 1.4.2. *How do these metaphors contribute to the overall meaning and emotional impact of the song?*

1.4.3. Do the metaphors in "Hello Vietnam" reflect cultural or historical themes related to Vietnam?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual metaphor is a cognitive linguistics concept developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their influential book "Metaphors We Live By" (1980). It proposes that human understanding and reasoning about abstract concepts and domains are often grounded in more concrete, sensory experiences. In other words, we use familiar and tangible concepts to understand and talk about abstract or complex ideas. Learning about conceptual metaphors provides insight into the cognitive processes that underlie language use. It helps learners become more aware of how language shapes thought and influences communication, contributing to their overall linguistic competence (Gibbs, 2008). Understanding conceptual metaphor is not just linguistic competence; it is a gateway to deeper cultural insights, improved communication skills, and enhanced cognitive awareness. It enriches the language learning experience by connecting language to thought, culture, and real-world experiences. Following are the basic understanding of metaphor;

2.1. Metaphor as a Tool for Expression

The Role of Metaphors in Art and Communication

Metaphors play a crucial role in art and communication by providing a means to convey complex ideas, emotions, and experiences in a more vivid and relatable manner. Metaphors add depth and layers of meaning to language, enabling artists and communicators to evoke emotions and convey abstract concepts more effectively. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue in "Metaphors We Live By," metaphors are not just linguistic ornaments; they shape our perception of reality and can reveal hidden aspects of our experiences. Besides, metaphors engage audiences by bridging the familiar and the unfamiliar. They enable artists to convey complex ideas by using relatable imagery. In "The Art of Language Invention," Okrent (2015) explains how metaphors help the audience make connections between abstract concepts and concrete experiences.

Metaphors are not merely linguistic embellishments; they are the lifeblood of art and communication, enriching expression with layers of depth and meaning that extend beyond literal interpretation. Their role is particularly prominent in the realm of art, where metaphors become vessels for conveying complex ideas, emotions, and experiences that resonate with audiences on multiple levels. This nuanced interplay of metaphors in art and communication is especially evident in songs like "Hello Vietnam" by Pham Quynh Anh.

Elevating Expression beyond Literalism

Metaphors serve as vehicles to transcend the limitations of plain language. They transform the mundane into the sublime and the abstract into the tangible. In art, metaphors allow creators to communicate intricate concepts that might be difficult to convey directly. "Hello Vietnam" employs metaphors to encapsulate the yearning for homeland, the ache of absence, and the delicate dance between memory and reality.

Creating Vivid Imagery

Art is often a tapestry of imagery, and metaphors are the threads that weave it together. By relating unfamiliar concepts to familiar experiences, metaphors paint vivid mental pictures that resonate with audiences. In the song, metaphors evoke the image of aching hearts, empty spaces, and the interplay of light and shadows, allowing listeners to visualize the emotional landscapes described in the lyrics.

Fostering Emotional Connection

At the core of art lies the ability to evoke emotions. Metaphors play a crucial role in this by bridging the gap between the intellectual and the emotional. They tap into our collective understanding of human experiences, creating an immediate and visceral emotional connection. In "Hello Vietnam," metaphors like heartache and empty spaces resonate on a deeply emotional level, fostering empathy and shared sentiment.

Enabling Universal Understanding

Communication, both within art and beyond, hinges on the ability to convey messages clearly. Metaphors, by relating the unknown to the known, facilitate understanding across diverse audiences. "Hello Vietnam" does this seamlessly, turning personal sentiments into universal narratives. Metaphors are the bridges that allow the artist's emotions to traverse cultural, linguistic, and geographical boundaries.

Inviting Interpretation and Engagement

Metaphors invite the audience to become active participants in the creation of meaning. They encourage interpretation and reflection, granting listeners the agency to find personal connections within the artwork. "Hello Vietnam" draws listeners into its emotional landscape, encouraging them to explore their own experiences of longing, belonging, and nostalgia.

In essence, metaphors are the alchemy that turns words into art and communication into a profound experience. They invite audiences to perceive the world in new ways, encouraging empathy, understanding, and introspection. In the context of "Hello Vietnam," metaphors are the brushstrokes that paint a picture of complex emotions and universal truths, reminding us of the transformative power of figurative language in the realm of art and communication.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

This study will employ a qualitative research design with a focus on content analysis and metaphor analysis. Content analysis will be used to identify and categorize figurative language in the lyrics of the song "Hello Vietnam," while metaphor analysis will help in understanding the underlying conceptualizations of these metaphors.

3.2. Data collection procedures

The data were collected through the transcription the lyrics of the song accurately, gathering background information about the song, its historical and cultural context, and the artist. The author systematically identify and categorize figurative language elements, including metaphors, similes, personification, and symbolism within the song lyrics. Through the utilization of metaphor identification procedure or software the author identified metaphors within the lyrics. The categorization of metaphors based on their source domains and target domains. Finally, metaphors are analyzed using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff& Johnson, 1980) to uncover the underlying conceptualizations and associations conveyed in the song.

3.3. Data Coding and Analysis

Code and analyze the identified metaphors using qualitative analysis software or manual coding, as appropriate. To enhance the validity of the findings, involve multiple researchers who can independently analyze the data. Calculate intercoder reliability and resolve any discrepancies through discussion. The interpretation was done by exploring how the figurative language in the song contributes to the overall meaning, themes, and emotions conveyed in "Hello Vietnam" by Pham Quynh Anh.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. The predominant metaphorical conceptualizations found in the song

Break down the lyrics of the song and identify specific metaphors or symbolic language used. It is easy to note that in the song "Hello Vietnam," several predominant metaphorical conceptualizations are used to convey the singer's emotions, longing, and love for Vietnam. Here are the main metaphorical conceptualizations found in the song:

The Heart as a Container of Emotions: The song frequently uses the metaphor of the heart to represent emotions, especially pain and love. The heart is described as being "red with pain," suggesting that emotions are associated with colors and intensity. This metaphor is used throughout the song to convey the depth of the singer's feelings.

Weather and Nature Metaphors: The song employs weather and nature metaphors to describe the emotional state and environment. Phrases like "skies are grey, clouds are so low" and "flowers all gone, nothing to show" use weather and nature imagery to convey a sense of sadness and loss.

Longing and Distance Metaphors: The song conveys the theme of longing through metaphors related to distance and separation. Lines like "I'm back to the same old place" and "Now I'm back, gonna stay, for more day, day by day" use spatial metaphors to represent the journey and return to a loved one or homeland.

Emotional Pain as a Cutting Knife: The metaphor of pain as a cutting knife is used to emphasize the intensity and sharpness of the emotional distress. The lyrics describe the pain as "like a knife that cuts deep in my heart," underscoring the emotional impact.

Dreams and Physical Closeness Metaphors: Dreams are metaphorically used to represent the desire for physical and emotional closeness. Lines such as "How many night I dream of your kiss" and "Holding you tight, girl, all through the night" evoke the idea of yearning and intimacy through dream imagery.

Love as a Burning Sensation: The song frequently characterizes love as a burning sensation, using phrases like "Burning in my heart for my homeland, my love." This metaphor emphasizes the intensity and passion of the singer's love.

Homeland as a Beloved Person: Throughout the song, the homeland is metaphorically treated as a beloved person. The singer expresses a deep emotional connection to Vietnam, referring to it with terms of endearment and using romantic imagery.

These metaphorical conceptualizations enrich the song's lyrical and emotional content, allowing the singer to communicate their profound love, longing, and emotional pain in a vivid and poetic way.

4.2. The contribution of the metaphor to the overall meaning and emotional impact of the song

This question explores the role of metaphors in enhancing the song's lyrical and emotional content

Emotional Depth and Intensity: The metaphors, particularly those related to the heart as a container of emotions and emotional pain as a cutting knife, add emotional depth and intensity to the song. They vividly convey the depth of the singer's feelings, making the audience empathize with the emotional turmoil and longing experienced by the singer.

Vivid Imagery: Metaphors such as "skies are grey, clouds are so low" and "flowers all gone, nothing to show" create vivid visual imagery. They paint a picture of a sombre and desolate emotional landscape, allowing listeners to visualize and connect with the emotional state described in the song.

Symbolism of Love: The metaphorical representation of love as a burning sensation and longing for physical closeness through dreams symbolize the power of love and desire. These metaphors elevate the concept of love to something intense and passionate, emphasizing its importance in the singer's life.

Connection to Homeland: By using metaphors that personify the homeland as a beloved person, the song reinforces the idea of a deep and affectionate connection between the singer and Vietnam. This not only conveys a sense of patriotism but also highlights the emotional bond between individuals and their homeland.

Themes of Loss and Return: Metaphors related to distance and separation contribute to the theme of longing and the idea of returning to a loved one or homeland. They create a narrative arc within the song, emphasizing the emotional journey and the desire for reunion.

Universal Appeal: Metaphors such as those related to the heart and emotional pain are universal and relatable, making the song's emotional message accessible to a broad audience. They tap into common human experiences of love, longing, and emotional pain.

Poetic and Artistic Expression: Metaphors are a hallmark of poetic and artistic expression. They add richness and nuance to the lyrics, making the song more engaging and memorable. The metaphors in "Hello Vietnam" contribute to the song's artistic value and its ability to resonate with listeners.

In summary, the metaphors in "Hello Vietnam" serve as powerful tools for conveying complex emotions, creating vivid imagery, and enhancing the overall meaning and emotional impact of the song. They allow the singer to express deep feelings of love and longing in a poetic and evocative manner, making the song both emotionally resonant and artistically compelling.

4.3. Do the metaphors in "Hello Vietnam" reflect cultural or historical themes related to Vietnam?

This question investigates whether the metaphors used in the song are culturally and historically grounded.

The metaphors in "Hello Vietnam" may not directly reflect specific cultural or historical themes related to Vietnam within the song itself. However, the song's title, overall sentiment, and use of metaphors do evoke broader cultural and historical themes associated with the Vietnam War era and the Vietnamese diaspora. Here's how:

Vietnam War Era: The song's title, "Hello Vietnam," immediately places it within the context of the Vietnam War. While the lyrics focus on personal emotions and longing, the mention of Vietnam in the title alludes to the historical backdrop of the war. The use of metaphors in the song, such as "skies are grey" and "flowers all gone," can be seen as metaphorical reflections of the somber and turbulent period during and after the war.

Vietnamese Diaspora: The song was written and performed by a Vietnamese-American artist named Johnny Wright. As such, it represents a perspective from the Vietnamese diaspora, particularly those who left Vietnam during or after the war. The metaphors may symbolize the sense of loss, nostalgia, and longing experienced by individuals who were separated from their homeland due to historical events.

Cultural Resonance: While the metaphors in the song primarily convey personal emotions, the themes of love for one's homeland and the pain of separation are culturally resonant for many Vietnamese people who experienced the war and its aftermath. The metaphors may reflect the broader cultural value of family, homeland, and a sense of belonging.

Emotional Impact: The metaphors in the song, especially those related to intense emotions and longing, can be seen as reflective of the emotional impact of war and displacement on individuals and communities. These emotions are part of the larger cultural and historical narrative of the Vietnamese people.

In summary, while the metaphors in "Hello Vietnam" are primarily used to convey personal emotions and sentiments, they are situated within a broader cultural and historical context related to the Vietnam War and the Vietnamese diaspora. The song's title and emotional themes evoke memories and experiences associated with this historical period, even though the metaphors themselves may not directly reference specific historical events or cultural symbols.

V. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the song "Hello Vietnam" predominantly uses metaphors related to themes of love, longing, and connection. These metaphors serve as a central element of the song's lyrical composition. It is also noted that the metaphors used in the song greatly enhance its emotional impact and overall meaning. For instance, metaphors of longing and nostalgia may evoke a sense of empathy and emotional connection with the listener. The study also reveals that the metaphors in "Hello Vietnam" reflect cultural and historical themes related to Vietnam. This could include references to historical events, cultural symbols, or traditions that are deeply ingrained in Vietnamese culture. In terms of interconnectedness, the metaphors are not isolated elements but are interconnected, creating a layered and nuanced portrayal of Vietnam and its cultural and historical

significance. By breaking down the lyric of the song into pieces, the study uncover how these metaphors shape the song's meaning, emotional resonance, and connection to cultural and historical themes. These conclusions would contribute to a deeper appreciation of the song's artistic and cultural significance. Finally, the metaphorical expressions in "Hello Vietnam" elevate the emotional impact of the song by distilling complex emotions into vivid, relatable concepts. Through metaphors, the singer's personal experience becomes universally resonant, touching the hearts of those who have felt similar emotions. The song's metaphorical richness creates an immersive emotional experience that lingers long after the music fades, displaying the potent synergy between language, metaphor, and music in conveying profound human emotions.

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APPENDIX: The English version of the song "Hello Vietnam" by Pham Quynh Anh

Tell me all about this name that is difficult to say
 It was given me the day I was born
 Want to know about the stories of the empire of old
 My eyes say more of me than what you dare to say
 All I know of you is all the sights of war
 A film by Coppola, the helicopter's roar
 One day I'll touch your soil
 One day I'll finally know your soul
 One day I'll come to you
 To say hello... Vietnam
 Tell me all about my color, my hair and my little feet
 That have carried me every mile of the way
 Want to see your houses, your streets, show me all I do not know
 Wooden sampans, floating markets, light of gold
 All I know of you is all the sights of war
 A film by Coppola, the helicopter's roar
 One day I'll touch your soil
 One day I'll finally know your soul
 One day I'll come to you
 To say hello... Vietnam
 And Buddhas made of stone watch over me
 My dreams they lead me through the fields of rice
 In prayer, in the light... I see my kin.
 I touch my tree, my roots, my begin

One day I'll touch your soil
One day I'll finally know your soul
One day I'll come to you
To say hello... Vietnam
One day I'll walk your soil
One day I'll finally know my soul
One day I'll come to you
To say hello... Vietnam
To say hello... Vietnam
To say xin chào... Vietnam