A CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR APPROACH TO LITERATURE TEACHING: A CASE STUDY OF THE POEM 'WAVES

UMA ABORDAGEM DE METÁFORA CONCEITUAL PARA O ENSINO DE LITERATURA: UM ESTUDO DE CASO DO POEMA 'WAVES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of a conceptual metaphor-based approach to the teaching of literature. This is an empirical study using two tests delivered to experimental and control groups of eleventh graders at a high school in Vietnam. The experimental group received the conceptual metaphor instruction while the control group got the traditional instruction. The research results indicate that the students in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group in terms of test performance. This finding confirms that this new approach to literature teaching produces positive results, which enables learners to understand a literary work better and enhances their metaphor awareness thus improving their learning outcomes. The results also illustrate the universality of conceptual metaphor rooted in humana thought. This research has implications for both teachers and students who want to take a new approach to literature teaching and learning.

Keywords: Conceptual metaphor, Literature, Love, Journey, Approach.

Resumo

A metáfora conceitual é amplamente usada na linguagem diária e escrita. Em contextos educacionais, a aplicação da teoria da metáfora conceitual ao ensino e à aprendizagem provou ter um bom impacto nos alunos, melhorando seu desempenho e facilitando seu processo de aprendizagem. O objetivo deste estudo é avaliar a eficácia de uma abordagem baseada em metáfora conceitual para o ensino de literatura. Este é um estudo empírico usando dois testes entregues a grupos experimentais e de controle de alunos do décimo primeiro ano em uma escola secundária no Vietnã. O grupo experimental recebeu a instrução de metáfora conceitual enquanto o grupo de controle recebeu a instrução tradicional. Os resultados da pesquisa indicam que os alunos do grupo experimental superaram aqueles do grupo de controle em termos de desempenho no teste. Esta descoberta confirma que esta nova abordagem ao ensino de literatura produz resultados positivos, o que permite que os alunos entendam melhor uma obra literária e aprimore sua consciência de metáfora, melhorando assim seus resultados de aprendizagem. Os resultados também ilustram a universalidade da metáfora conceitual enraizada no pensamento humano. Esta pesquisa tem implicações para professores e alunos que desejam adotar uma nova abordagem ao ensino e à aprendizagem de literatura.

Palavras-chave: Metáfora conceitual, Literatura, Amor, Jornada, Abordagem.

Introduction

Traditionally, metaphor is seen as a poetic or rhetorical device that is used in extraordinary language rather than ordinary one. However, it is pervasive in everyday life, influencing not just language, but also thought and action. Our conceptual system, which governs how we think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical. This system which shapes our perceptions, actions, and interactions with others plays a pivotal role in defining our everyday realities. Although we are generally unaware of our conceptual system, it operates automatically in our daily lives. By examining language, we can identify the metaphors that structure our thought and action (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In essence, conceptual metaphor reflects the relationship between language and human thought, which is naturally grounded on bodily experience and shaped by cultural context. Therefore, conceptual metaphor is both universal and culture-specific due to national mindset (Kövecses, 2005; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Therefore, the study of conceptual metaphor reveals the soul of a nation.

Although conceptual metaphor has been around for over four decades, its pedagogic implications have not received much attention from researchers until recently. More and more scholars have realised the cognitive function of conceptual

metaphor and introduced it into educational contexts. A great number of studies have been conducted on the application of conceptual metaphor theory in different fields of teaching such as science (e.g. Daane, et al., 2018) and language teaching (e.g. Bui et al., 2018; Danesi, 2016; Hongyan, 2020; Jacobsen, 2016; Kartal & Uner, 2017; Lixia & Jing, 2023; Pham, 2021; Pham & To, 2019; Shan, 2020; Vadipoor et al., 2023; Veliz, 2017; Zhang, 2019). Danesi (2016, p. 150) holds that "the question of the validity and the teachability of metaphorical competence is largely an uncontroversial one". It can be taught in a structured way, similar to any other aspect of a second language, and it can be linked to linguistic and communicative competencies through syllabus design.

The area of conceptual metaphor-based language teaching has attracted great attention from linguists. For example, Hongyan (2020) explored the application of conceptual metaphor theory to English vocabulary learning concluding that this method improves students' vocabulary learning efficiency by arousing their motivation and improving their vocabulary enlarging skills. Most of the other studies focus on the effectiveness of this teaching method. Pham (2021) examined students' attitudes towards conceptual metaphor-inspired instruction in English idiom learning using an attitudinal questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The results reveal that the students responded positively to conceptual metaphor-motivated instruction despite certain shortcomings. Similarly, Shan (2020) carried out a study into the feasibility of the conceptual metaphorical approach to teaching idioms. The author concludes that a good understanding of conceptual metaphors helps improve students' learning outcomes so it is feasible to apply conceptual metaphors in idiom teaching and learning. This conclusion aligns with other studies by Kartal and Uner (2017), Lixia & Jing (2023), Pham & To (2019), who claim that in addition to memorization of word forms and meanings, acquisition and awareness of the cognitive structure of meanings facilitates vocabulary teaching and learning. In the area of writing teaching, Vadipoor et al. (2023) conducted an empirical study to measure the effect of conceptual metaphor on EFL learners' writing creativity and metacognitive writing awareness. The study indicates that conceptual metaphors are effective literary devices which enhance

EFL learners' idea generation, writing creativity, and metacognitive writing awareness and thus should be included in university curricula. In the same vein, Zhang's study (2019) concludes that developing metaphorical competence can enhance language learners' writing skills in terms of lexical density, use of metaphorical expressions, and reduction of linguistic errors.

Metaphor is pervasive in literature and it is challenging for learners to decipher literary metaphor which hinders their learning process. It is because the use of conceptual metaphor in poetry is influenced by characteristics of poetic language such as comprehensive, symbolic, and musical. In addition, "in poetry, there are different levels of figurative meaning such as passage level, verse level, stanza level,... which makes it difficult for readers to realise metaphor structures" (Pham, 2017, p. 71). Teaching literary works in the light of conceptual metaphor theory is a new teaching method that allows learners to discover artistic and metaphorically expressed messages sent by the author, thus facilitating their learning process. However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, there has not been any theoretical or empirical study into a conceptual metaphor-based literature teaching approach. Therefore, this paper chooses the application of the conceptual metaphor theory to the teaching of literature as the research topic to fill this research gap. It aims to measure the effectiveness of the conceptual metaphor-motivated instruction in teaching literature through the case of the poem "Waves" by Xuan Quynh in the literature textbook for Vietnamese eleventh graders. Our main hypothesis is that the conceptual metaphor-based approach to literature teaching has a positive impact on learners' learning outcomes. The research question is: *How does a conceptual metaphor-based approach to literature teaching impact learners' learning outcomes?* The authors hope that this study will provide a deep insight into the pedagogical implications of conceptual metaphor.

Theoretical Background

Overview of Conceptual Metaphor

Every day, people think in language and use it to express ideas. That is why conceptual metaphor which is deeply rooted in humans' thought exists widely in everyday language and literature. Metaphor is so universal that people use it almost completely unconsciously. "In the cognitive linguistic view, metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain" (Kövecses, 2010, p. 4). The basic formula of conceptual metaphor is "A is B" in which A is the target domain and B is the source domain. The source domain projects its attributes onto the target domain to make the target domain more explicit. Lakoff and Johnson hold that "the metaphorical concept is systematic, the language we use to talk about that aspect of the concept is systematic" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 8).

Humans perceive the world around them through their five senses, which is often referred to as the systematization of experiences into organized schemas in their mind. "In light of cognitive linguistics, the relationship between language and thinking is viewed from newer perspectives. All humans have the same perceptual system in terms of biological structure; that is, no matter what skin color or ethnic group persons belong to, they all have the same five senses, circulatory system, nervous system, etc.. However, each nation has a different way of perceiving the world under the influence of many factors." (Pham, 2023, p. 48). That is why conceptual metaphor is both universal and culture-specific.

The Mapping Mechanism of Conceptual Metaphor

Conceptual metaphor is formed based on two guiding principles: the principle of similarity and the principle of prominence. The first principle is based on the fact that people tend to group similar entities into one category, which lays a foundation for framing new concepts. The basic formula of a conceptual metaphor is "A is B" in which A is conceptualized metaphorically in terms of B due to their perceived similarities. The similarities between entities are used to categorize things in humans' mind.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 5) analyse how time is conceptualized for illustration: "Time in our culture is a valuable commodity. It is a limited resource that we use to accomplish our goals. Because of the way that the concept of work has developed in modern Western culture, where work is typically associated with the time it takes and time is precisely quantified, it has become customary to pay people by the hour, week, or year". Similarly, they explain how an argument is metaphorically structured: "Imagine a culture where an argument is viewed as a dance, the participants are seen as performers, and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way. In such a culture, people would view arguments differently, experience them differently, carry them out differently, and talk about them differently."

Another illustrative example is the conceptual metaphor HUMAN IS A PLANT which is constructed based on the correspondence between the source and target domains and the activation of various cross-domain mappings. Different stages in a plant's growth process including seeding, sapling, maturity, flowering and fruiting, and senescence are often associated with different stages in a person's life including birth, infancy, adolescence, adulthood, and death. Humans' features are also perceived in terms of plants' characteristics. For instance, a young person's hair is described as "*green*" – the color of a plant or grass when in full growth. The *pink* colour of flowers in bloom – the best stage in the growth process of a plant – is also used to depict a young girl's cheeks. Similarly, young people are understood in terms of *green leaves* and old ones are cognitively perceived by means of *yellow leaves*. Therefore, the abnormal phenomenon of green leaves falling before yellow ones refers to the reality of young people dying before the old.

The second principle of prominence is that only the most prominent features of B are used to project onto A. In other words, when the source domain is mapped onto the target domain, only quintessential properties in the source domain are selected. This can be attributed to the fact that we tend to focus our attention on prominent aspects of things or people. For example, all roses are characterised by certain features such as color, fragrance, petals, and stamens; however, they are more often perceived by means of colors. Therefore, color is one of the salient

features for humans to conceptualise this species of flower. As for the metaphor TIME IS MONEY, the target domain of time is an abstract concept while the source domain of money is a concrete one. Money is characterised by such features as function, material, and type (dollars, cash, coins, etc.), and the choice of the characteristic to be mapped is context-dependent. For example:

"It is a real *waste* of time to wait for 2 hours."

"*Waste*" refers to the use of money. In this metaphorical expression, attributes such as material, type of currency, etc., are not prominent and hence not projected; the mapped feature is how money is used.

"I will *spend* the last 2 days of the weekend going out with you, my son."

In this case, the prominent feature chosen for the mapping process is usage. Just like money, time can be saved and *spent*.

Conceptual Metaphor in Literature

Conceptual metaphor is pervasive in both speech and writing. In literature, conceptual metaphor makes the literary language more concise and impactful, clearly and elaborately conveying the author's messages. "Metaphorical concepts can be extended beyond the range of ordinary literal ways of thinking and talking into the range of what is called figurative, poetic, colorful, or fanciful thought and language" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 14). Thus, conceptual metaphor is a way of human thinking and organizing language even in literature.

According to Kövecses (2010, p. 53-55), poets often use four devices including extending, elaboration, questioning and combining to create new unconventional language. "In extending, a conventional conceptual metaphor associated with certain conventionalized linguistic expressions is expressed by new linguistic means based on introducing a new conceptual element in the source domain.". For instance, as for the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS SLEEP, only certain attributes of the source domain of sleep like closed eyes and irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions are mapped onto the target domain of death. However, in Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet*, dream as a component of sleep is chosen to describe the death.

To sleep? Perchance to dream! Ay, there's the rub;

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come?

In the case of the elaboration device, rather than introducing a new element to the source domain, it extends on an existing element of the source in an unconventional manner. For example, the conventional conceptual metaphor DEATH IS A DEPARTURE can be replaced by a more concrete one – DEATH IS AN ETERNAL EXILE ON A RAFT. In the conventional metaphor, death is conceived as a long journey with no return on a means of transport. The metaphor DEATH IS AN ETERNAL EXILE ON A RAFT describes death in a more specific and detailed way. It is an exile – a form of departure due to being expelled on a specific means of transport – the raft.

Regarding questioning, writers can question the very appropriateness of familiar everyday metaphors. For instance, in the following verse "*Why does youth never come back a second time while spring is repetitive?*", the author questions the illogicality of the conventional conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A YEAR. Youth which comes just once in a lifetime is understood in terms of spring which repeats every year, making the mapping sound illogic. However, this is acceptable in poetic language.

The last device involves the combination of two or more conventional conceptual metaphors which is perhaps the most powerful mechanism to go beyond the everyday conceptual system. The following stanza is a good example:

The birds are chirping merrily in the garden

The young girl is gazing at the morning dew

How peaceful the early spring day is

Rose petals form those bright smiles

This stanza uses two conceptual metaphors LIFE IS A YEAR (*How peaceful the early spring day is* in which youth is perceived as an early spring day) and HUMANS ARE PLANTS (*Rose petals form those bright smiles* in which smiles are conceived as rose petals).

Methodology

Research Method

The research combines quantitative and qualitative methods. First, the quantitative method is employed to quantify students' levels of performance and metaphor awareness. This method provides basic, general information about the research subjects for statistical analysis. In other words, it quantifies the collection and analysis of data.

The qualitative method is used to obtain detailed information for in-depth analysis and evaluation of the research results. This method enables the researchers to assess the effectiveness of students' appreciation of literary works in light of conceptual metaphor theory.

Respondents

The participants include 43 eleventh graders for the experimental group and 43 eleventh graders for the control group at a high school in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Instruments

The research tools include two tests administered to Class 11C1 as experimental group and Class 11C2 as control group (see Appendices). Test 1 with both multiple-choice and essay questions aims to evaluate students' awareness of conceptual metaphor. Even though conceptual metaphor was not presented to Class 11C2, Test 1 was delivered to this group for the findings of some cognitive studies show that conceptual metaphor exists unconsciously in every person's mind and thinking. Test 2 aims at testing the hypothesis that learning about conceptual metaphor has a positive impact on students' learning outcomes.

Procedures

The initial step of the study involved the selection of a suitable literary work that contains metaphorical expressions. The poem "Waves" by Xuan Quynh in the literature textbook for Vietnamese eleventh graders was chosen because of the

following reasons. First, many teachers assert that this poem is very popular with students. Psychologically, 11th-grade students are aged 17, an age at which they start to develop affection for the opposite sex and hold their own views about love and life. The central theme of this poem is love, so it holds great attraction to young people. Second, the poem contains a typical conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY and the researchers wanted to select a literary work with an easily recognisable conceptual metaphor to teach to students.

In the next stage, the research site was decided on, which is a high school in Ha Noi, Vietnam. The selected classes for the research are Class 11C1 and Class 11C2 which are both taught by one of the researchers – Nguyen Thi Huong Quynh. Class 11C1 is the experimental group while class 11C2 is the control group. Each group has 43 students. The curriculum of the two classes mainly focuses on social sciences subjects, one of which being literature so the two classes' students are assumed to have a natural aptitude and a true love for literature.

The next step involved preparing a lesson plan for the poem "Waves" with conceptual metaphor content and delivering the conceptual metaphor-instructed lessons to Class 11C1 in two lesson periods, each lasting 45 minutes. Conceptual metaphor, however, was not presented to Class 11C2; the teacher used the traditional approach to teach this group.

Next, two tests were delivered to both experimental and control groups to evaluate the effectiveness of the experiment and measure the level of conceptual metaphor awareness in students. Finally, the scores and test results obtained by the two groups were compared, based on which the authors drew some conclusions and implications.

Conceptual Metaphor in the Poem "Waves"

The poem "Waves" by Xuan Quynh belongs to volume 1, lesson 1 of the literature textbook for Vietnamese eleventh graders. The main character of the poem is a female. Throughout the poem, there exists a continuous intertwining between the wave and the protagonist. More specifically, the wave incarnates the female character to tell a love story. The rich content and artistic quality of the poem

is attributable to the use of the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY. Love is conceptualised as a journey so understanding the mapping mechanism between the source domain of a journey and the target domain of love will facilitate the perception of romantic love. The mapping for this metaphor is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 – The one-correspondence mapping scheme of the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY

The source domain: JOURNEY	The target domain: LOVE
(1) travellers/ things that move	=> lovers
(2) difficulties during a journey	=> obstacles encountered in a love relationship
(3) events in a journey	=> occurrences in a love relationship
(4) distance to travel in a journey	=> distance between lovers
(5) feelings of travellers/ states of things that move	=> emotions of lovers
(6) choices of which route(s) to take in a journey	=> decisions about love
(7) departure point of a journey	=> reason to begin a love relationship
(8) destination of a journey	=> ending of a love relationship

As can be seen from the table, the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY is constructed by means of a set of eight cross-domain mappings. Both lovers and waves take part in a journey, so people in love are reflected as waves. The departure point of the journey is unknown, just like the inexplicable reason why a love relationship develops. It is specified by the poet that waves are generated by wind; however, what causes wind is still unknown.

Waves are generated by wind

but what causes wind?

I even don't know

when we fell in love

The physical distance between two lovers is talked about in terms of the distance between the wave and the shore. Regarding destination, all waves head toward the shore. Similarly, the female in love always heads toward the place where her lover is staying. In terms of movement, waves go up and down in the ocean;

likewise, every romantic relationship inevitably has its ups and downs. Just like a journey, a love relationship also has its obstacles or difficulties.

> *When travelling North*
>
> *or travelling South*
>
> *I think of you anywhere I go*
>
> *and head to your place*
>
> *Out there in the ocean*
>
> *there are thousands of waves*
>
> *all reach the shore*
>
> *in spite of multiple obstacles*

The choice of which route to take is mapped onto the decision in love. The wave's decision to dissolve forever in the open ocean refers to a couple's option to love each other forever.

> *Waves don't understand*
>
> *why they travel to the ocean*

Different states of the wave such as *wild, gentle, noisy, quiet,* and *long for* are projected onto different emotions of lovers and distinctive characteristics of love.

> *Wild and gentle*
>
> *noisy and quiet*
>
> *Waves don't understand*
>
> *why they travel to the ocean*
>
> *...*
>
> *Waves at the ocean bottom*
>
> *or waves on the ocean surface*
>
> *all long for their shores*
>
> *Day and night, they can't sleep*
>
> *My heart longs for you*
>
> *It stays awake even in my dreams*

The poem makes effective use of the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY, which portrays a deep, faithful love and reflects the virtue of faithfulness in Vietnamese females.

Findings and Discussion

Findings of Test 1

The students' scores for Test 1 are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Students' scores for Test 1

Score	Class 11C1		Class 11C2	
	Frequency	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
≤ 5	8	18.6%	30	69.8%
6	16	37.2%	11	25.6%
7	10	23.3%	2	4.6%
8	8	18.6%	0	0.0%
≥ 9	1	2.3%	0	0.0%

As can be seen from Table 2, the students in Class 11C1 achieved higher scores than those in Class 11C2, which demonstrates that the experimental group did absorb the conceptual metaphor theory introduced to them. More specifically, only 18.6% of students from Class 11C1 got a mark 5 or less than 5 compared to 69.8% in Class 11C2. The proportions of learners in Class 11C1 who achieved marks 6 and 7 are 37.2% and 23.3% respectively while only 25.6% and 4.6% from Class 11C2 received marks 6 and 7. 20.9% of students from Class 11C1 got marks 8 or more than 8 while none from the control group received these marks.

A closer look at the students' performance in each part of the test reveals interesting facts. Table 3 and Table 4 give a breakdown of correct answers for part 1, Test 1 by question number and quantity.

Table 3 – Correct answers by question number for part 1, Test 1

Question number	Class 11C1		Class 11C2	
	Number of correct answers	**Percentage**	**Number of correct answers**	**Percentage**
Question 1	40	93.0%	18	41.9%
Question 2	42	97.7%	39	90.7%
Question 3	42	97.7%	17	39.5%
Question 4	38	88.4%	7	16.3%
Question 5	23	53.5%	28	65.1%
Question 6	28	65.1%	0	0.0%

Table 4 – Correct answers by quantity for part 1, Test 1

Number of correct answers	Class 11C1		Class 11C2	
	Frequency	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1	0	0.0%	16	37.3%
2	6	13.9%	17	39.5%
3	11	25.6%	8	18.6%
4	14	32.6%	2	4.6%
5	7	16.3%	0	0.0%
6	5	11.6%	0	0.0%

As can be seen from Table 3 and Table 4, class 11C1 outperformed class 11C2 in terms of correct answers. More specifically, in Table 4, the percentages of the students who could give 3 correct answers in Class 11C1 and Class 11C2 are 25.6% and 18.6% respectively. As for the 4-correct-answer category, the proportion for Class 11C1 is 32.6%, which is seven times higher than that of Class 11C2 at 4.6%. 16.3% and 11.6% of students in the experimental group could answer 5 and 6 questions correctly while no one in the control group got 5 or 6 correct answers. Most students in Class 11C2 (76.8%) could give 1 or 2 correct answers. However, although lessons with conceptual metaphor content were not given to Class 11C2, the number of the students who gave correct answers was not too low. For example, the percentages of correct answers for questions 1, 2, 3, and 5 are 41.9%, 90.7%, 39.5%, and 65.1% respectively (see Table 3).

The results for part 2, Test 1 are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5 – Correct answers by quantity for part 2, Test 1

Number of correct answers	Class 11C1		Class 11C2	
	Frequency	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1	0	0.0%	18	41.9%
2	5	11.6%	13	30.2%
3	17	39.5%	8	18.6%
4	11	25.6%	2	4.7%
5	10	23.3%	0	0.0%
6	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

As demonstrated in Table 5, the performance of Class 11C1 is better than that of Class 11C2. For class 11C2, the highest percentage belongs to the 1-correct-answer category at 41.9%, followed by 2-correct-answer and 3-correct answer

groups at 30.2% and 18.6% respectively. In the case of Class 11C1, the three highest percentages are 39.5%, 25.6%, and 23.3% for the 3-, 4- and 5-correct-answer categories respectively. 11.6% of the students in Class 11C1 gave 2 correct answers and 0% got 1 correct answer. In contrast, only 4.7% in Class 11C2 could give 4 correct answers and 0% had 5 or 6 correct answers.

As for part 3, in class 11C1, many students could figure out the mapping mechanism between the source domain and the target domain in the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY. In contrast, in class 11C2, most of the students failed to recognize that mapping, although some demonstrated a certain awareness of conceptual metaphor. Below are some excerpts from students' papers.

Excerpt 1 by student N.P.T, Class 11C1:

The conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY in the poem "Waves" reflects the poet's innovative and novel way of thinking about love. Love is a very beautiful and noble thing so all of us need love. The metaphor of love is an outstanding creation by Xuan Quynh. Different aspects of love can be understood and visualised in terms of different attributes of a journey. For example, the female character and her lover are seen as waves that travel to the shore. Similarly, the decision to make in a love relationship can be understood in terms of a decision to make during a journey. This metaphor reveals hidden messages conveyed by the poem and at the same time gives insight into aspects of love.

Excerpt 2 by student Đ.H.G, Class 11C1:

The poem "Waves" reveals the poet's innovative way of perceiving love through the use of the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY. First of all, the poet has found some perceived similarities between the two domains of journey and love based on which to form this metaphor. For instance, difficulties in a journey are used to project onto obstacles in a love relationship. Likewise, the distance to travel in a journey is mapped onto the distance between two people in love. The metaphor enables readers to have a profound understanding of the poem.

Excerpt 3 by student V.Đ.M, Class 11C2:

The conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY unveils Xuan Quynh's original perception of love. Love becomes more beautiful when it is metaphorically reflected.

Love is like a journey. Each journey has its own difficulties, the starting point and the destination. Similarly, a journey of love has its own obstacles, the reason why it starts and the ending.

The results of Test 1 reveal that Class 11C1 outperformed Class 11C2 in most parts of the test. However, in every part, some 11C2 students could give correct answers. This supports the argument of some conceptual metaphor theorists that linguistic competence is inborn and determined by genes. Metaphor as an important part of language is a useful tool for humans to perceive and conceptualise the world around them. This process happens in humans' neocortex where complex hierarchical networks of concepts are shaped. Also, metaphor is grounded in bodily experience.

Findings of Test 2

The scores for Test 2 of Class 11C1 and Class 11C2 are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 – Students' scores for Test 2

Score	Class 11C1		Class 11C2	
	Frequency	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
≤ 5	6	14.0%	5	11.6%
6	17	39.5%	26	60.5%
7	11	25.6%	7	16.3%
8	8	18.6%	5	11.6%
≥ 9	1	2.3%	0	0.0%

As shown in Table 6, the percentages of below-average scores (≤ 5) achieved by Class 11C1 and Class 11C2 are almost the same (14.0% and 11.6% respectively). Class 11C2 got more mark 6 than Class 11C1 (60.5% compared to 39.5%). In terms of good scores (from mark 7), Class 11C1 got higher scores than Class 11C2. The percentages of mark 7 and mark 8 for Class 11C1 are 25.6% and 18.6% respectively while the figures for Class 11C2 are 16.3% and 11.6% respectively. The results show that learning about conceptual metaphor enables students to appreciate the poem more deeply.

The students' comprehension of the poem is further demonstrated through their perception of love as a journey as shown in their answers for part 2. It is

observed that many students in class 11C1 could point out the attributes of a journey that are projected onto love in the extracted verses. However, most of the students from Class 11C2 failed to do so. Below are some excerpts from students' papers.

Excerpt 1 by student N.L.G, Class 11C1:

In the extracted verses, some attributes of a journey are mapped onto corresponding attributes of love. First, the distance between the wave and the shore is used to metaphorically describe the distance between two lovers. In the same way, different states of the wave such as wild, gentle, noisy, and quiet are employed to conceptualise different emotions of people in love. Also, the wave's choice of the route to take that is running to the ocean is projected onto the decision of lovers in the target domain. In terms of destination, all waves travel to the shore just like people in love choose to head toward where their lovers are staying.

Excerpt 2 by student T.B.L, Class 11C1:

There are four attributes of a journey that are mapped onto the corresponding attributes of love. In the first place, all waves travel to the shore and this feature is projected onto the target domain to illustrate the fact that people in love always head toward the place where their lovers are staying. Secondly, the feelings of people in love such as longing for each other are expressed by means of waves' states. Next, the choice of the wave to travel to and dissolve forever in the ocean is mapped onto lovers' decision to love each other forever in love. Last, the distance between two lovers is metaphorically conceptualized in terms of the distance between the wave and the shore.

Excerpt 3 by student N.M.H, Class 11C2:

In these verses, certain attributes of a journey are projected onto love. For instance, the distance between lovers is measured by means of the distance between the wave and the shore. In a similar fashion, the choice of the wave to head to and dissolve in the open ocean refers to the two lovers' decision to love each other forever.

Discussion

The experimental research went through several steps: selecting a suitable literary work and research site, preparing a lesson plan with conceptual metaphor content, delivering the lessons, and testing. The results reveal interesting facts.

First, the experimental class did better than the control class in terms of test performance, which can be attributed to the fact that the conceptual metaphor theory was introduced to the former class. Thus, it is effective to apply the conceptual metaphor theory to the teaching of literature which deepens learners' understanding of the poem and has a positive impact on their learning outcomes. This is a new teaching approach, helping learners explore literary works from the perspectives of cognitive linguistics to discover the author's hidden artistic messages and understand the literary work better. This finding is consistent with the previous studies by Kartal and Uner (2017), Hongyan (2020), Pham and To (2019), Shan (2020), Vadipoor et al., (2023), Veliz (2017), Zhang (2019) which state that incorporating conceptual metaphor content into teaching does improve learners' learning performance.

Second, even though Class 11C2 students were not taught about conceptual metaphor, they demonstrated an awareness of conceptual metaphor due to their innate linguistic ability and the universality of metaphor. This proves that conceptual metaphor is a way of human thinking which is universal and exists unconsciously in the human mind. Therefore, the students can recognise conceptual metaphor. The results obtained are consistent with earlier studies on cognitive linguistics and conceptual metaphors (Kövecses, 2005). This also shows that the application of the conceptual metaphor theory to teaching literary works has a scientific basis.

Conclusion

This study examines the application of a conceptual metaphor-based approach to the teaching of literature, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The experimental group was taught using conceptual metaphor theory, while the control group was taught using traditional methods. The results confirm the effectiveness of applying conceptual metaphor to literature teaching by deepening learners' appreciation of a literary text and enhancing their learning outcomes. Having a good knowledge of conceptual metaphor helps learners recognise metaphorically expressed messages sent by the writer, facilitating their learning process and arousing their interest in learning. Although the control group was not explicitly taught about conceptual metaphor, many students still showed an unconscious awareness of metaphor, suggesting that metaphor is a universal aspect of human cognition. The results also illustrate the fact that conceptual metaphor reflects humans' thinking and is culture-specific.

While the results are promising, the study has some limitations. The sample size is relatively small, which may limit the ability to generalize the findings to a broader population. Furthermore, the research rely solely on two tests to evaluate students' understanding, which may not fully capture the complexity of their metaphorical comprehension. Given these limitations, future research could expand the sample size and involve students from various regions or educational backgrounds to better assess the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, using a variety of evaluation tools such as interviews or classroom observations could provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' metaphorical awareness.

This research has implications for educational institutions and educators that want to take a new approach to literature teaching. Instead of adopting the traditional teaching methods, literature teachers can combine a variety of teaching techniques including the conceptual metaphor-based one to enhance learners' learning outcomes. As for students, an improved metaphor awareness would facilitate their learning and increase their performance.

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Appendices

TEST 1
(Time allowance: 45 minutes)

PART 1: Multiple choice questions (3 points)
1. Which of the following do you think best describes conceptual metaphor?
a. It reflects human thinking
b. It has a permanent context-based meaning.
2. In your opinion, which conceptual metaphor does the poem "Waves" express?
a. LOVE IS A JOURNEY
b. LOVE IS FIRE
c. LOVE IS FOOD
d. LOVE IS A NATURAL PHENOMENON
3. In the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY, the concept of love is constructed by means of which of the following attributes?
a. Travelers on a journey
b. Vehicles
c. Benefits of a journey
d. All the features of a journey
4. In your opinion, what does the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY reflect?
a. Xuan Quynh's perception of love
b. Xuan Quynh's attitude towards love
5. In your view, the construction of the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY is influenced by which of the following?
a. the person Xuan Quynh loves
b. the poetic soul of Xuan Quynh
c. personal experiences in Xuan Quynh's life
d. the society
6. Match an aspect of a journey in column A with a corresponding aspect of love in column B

A	B
(1) travellers/ things that move	A. distance between lovers
(2) feelings of travellers/ states of things that move	B. ending of a love relationship
(3) events in a journey	C. obstacles encountered in a love relationship
(4) distance to travel in a journey	D. lovers
(5) difficulties encountered during a journey	E. occurrences in a love relationship
(6) choices of which route(s) to take in a journey	F. decisions about love
(7) destination of a journey	G. emotions of lovers

PART 2: (2.5 points)
Find one example for each of the following aspects of the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY in the poem "Waves".
a. travellers/ things that move/ lovers
b. events/ occurrences
c. difficulties/ obstacles
d. choices/ decisions
e. destination/ ending
f. distance

PART 3: Writing (4.5 points)
Write a paragraph on the following topic:
In the poem "Waves", the use of the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY reflects Xuan Quynh's innovative way of thinking about love.

TEST 2
(Time allowance: 45 minutes)

PART 1: (4 points)
Read the following excerpt from the book "Metaphor We Live by" by Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 9-10) and answer questions 1-3:
"To get an idea of how metaphorical expressions in everyday language can give us insight into the metaphorical nature of the concepts that structure our everyday activities, please consider the metaphorical concept TIME IS MONEY as it is reflected in contemporary English.
TIME IS MONEY
You're *wasting* my time.
This gadget will *save* you hours.
I don't *have* the time to *give* you.
How do you *spend* your time these days?
That flat tire *cost* me an hour.
I've *invested* a lot of time in her.
Time in our culture is a valuable commodity. It is a limited resource that we use to accomplish our goals. Because of the way that the concept of work has developed in modern Western culture, where work is typically associated with the time it takes and time is precisely quantified, it has become customary to pay people by the hour, week, or year."
Question 1: Find the attributes of money as a source domain in the following sentences (1 point)
You're *wasting* my time.
This gadget will *save* you hours.
I don't *have* the time to *give* you.
How do you *spend* your time these days?
That flat tire *cost* me an hour.
I've *invested* a lot of time in her.

Question 2: Explain Lakoff and Johnson's statement "Time in our culture is a valuable commodity." (2 points).
Question 3: Point out the source and target domains in the metaphorical concept TIME IS MONEY (1 point)

PART 2: (6 points)
"Waves" is one prominent love poem by Xuan Quynh. In the poem, some attributes of a journey are mapped onto corresponding attributes of a romantic love. Read the following verses and point out which attributes of a journey are projected onto love.
Wild and gentle
noisy and quiet
Waves don't understand
why they travel to the ocean
Waves at the ocean bottom
or waves on the ocean surface
all long for their shores
Day and night, they can't sleep
My heart longs for you
It stays awake even in my dreams
When travelling North
or travelling South
I think of you anywhere I go
and head to your place