

The Conceptual Metaphor of “Blue” in Vietnamese Language



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ABSTRACT: Having been developed from the 1980s to the present, the conceptual metaphor theory, which has been accepted as a scientific foundation with fully explainable ability, allows researchers to understand and interpret world categories through the system of ideas that are experienced in language. In the light of cognitive linguistics, metaphor is considered as one of the forms of conceptual thinking, reflecting people's ways of thinking and conceptualization of the world around through linguistic expressions, a cognitive mechanism through which the logic of abstract concepts is replaced by the logic of more concrete concepts. Within the scope of this scientific paper, we draw attention to the conceptual metaphor of color, in which blue is a mapped source concept to a different target domain perceived by the Vietnamese.

KEY WORDS: conceptual metaphor, linguistics expression, blue, source domain, target domain

1. INTRODUCTION

The history of linguistic research recognizes metaphorical approaches from many different perspectives. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, metaphor is known as mental mapping, reflecting the creative thinking of man. "Metaphor pervades everywhere in everyday life, not only in language but also in thought and action" [6, p.3]. Accordingly, through the metaphorical method, man perceives the physical and spiritual world. Cognitive linguists have shown the perceptual mechanism of conceptual metaphor including source and target domain, which is the irradiation between a material and concrete source domain onto an abstract target domain. In essence, "metaphor allows us to understand relatively abstract or non-structured objects through more concrete objects or at least through higher structured objects" [1, p.71].

Applying cognitive linguistic theory into Vietnamese practice, cognitive linguists particularly interest in clarifying the structure of conceptual metaphor with different source domains. In which, a conceptual metaphor with the source domain of colour is considered as an effective means for people to perceive the world around them and explore themselves in many different ways. Knowledge of colors and reality palettes are specifically and subtly perceived, decoded, and become the basis for the perception of complex concepts in the Vietnamese spiritual life. Evidence found shows that colour is used as a source domain to explore the characteristics and properties of an abstract target domain in order to express and form new ideas, opening up to the understanding of the Vietnamese basic thinking and cognitive processes about the world. In fact, the linguistic expressions associated with blue like *love is still blue, life is blue again, and blue hope*, etc ... the hidden concept of BLUE appears quite popular in the Vietnamese language. In this article, we focus on examining the conceptual metaphor of blue, hoping to help the readers have a specific view of the structure of the conceptual metaphor of BLUE, contributing to complete the general research picture of the conceptual metaphor of colour in Vietnamese language.

2. MODEL OF METAPHORIC COGNITIVE OF THE NOTION "BLUE" IN VIETNAMESE

2.1. The concept BLUE in Vietnamese

In the system of basic colors in Vietnamese, "blue" appears popularly in everyday communication as well as in literary works. Vietnamese dictionary [4; p.1102] defines "blue" with specific definitions:

- + 1. The color of green leaves and seawater (green bamboo, green mountain blue water, pale like a green leaf, green food for cattle);
2. (The fruit) unripe, the color is still green (green banana);
3. (Human, age) young (green hair, green age).

According to Tran Van Co (2011), the concept of a field-function structure is organized as the central and peripheral model. The nuclear concept is at the center of the field. Surrounding, dominating the central concept, which is universal, is a series of peripheral factors. Accordingly, examining the meaning of blue in the dictionary, we found that, in the structure of the meaning of "blue", the first feature, having color, associated with the representative things of water and leaves, the meaning represents the central concept of blue. The above basic definition is stable in the general perception of Vietnamese people. In addition, the fact of using Vietnamese recognizes the different "color" properties of "leaves" or "seawater" with countless different shades represented by a rich amount of linguistic expressions: ultramarine, turquoise, verdant, etc. In the second and third concepts of "blue" associated with the

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characteristics of things and phenomena in different directions: positive or negative. It means that when it comes to "green", these elements are simultaneously activated and appear in the mind, following their respective associations. For example, the "positive", "negative" elements will entail associations represented by the factors indicating the intensity and brightness: dark blue, pale, turquoise, etc.

In Vietnamese, things that are considered to represent "unripe" features are not necessarily of the same category. Specifically, in some cases, the meaning of "still green" is applied to new things or phenomena, which are not things that often have the most typical characteristics of color properties such as you are still young, etc. The basic properties of the concept of color such as hue, brightness, heat, perceived aesthetic value of color become the basis for the perception of things and phenomena in the Vietnamese spiritual life. That is, there has been a shift of the concept of color to the abstract concept in human thought. This is the mechanism that forms the conceptual metaphor of BLUE.

It can be seen that the "blue" conceptual structure consists of different elements. In which, the center of the conceptual structure is the concept of "blue" associated with the mentioned specific properties. In Vietnamese, linguistic expressions are often used to express the concept of "blue", which is various: blue, light blue, green, turquoise, etc. We considered these expressions as an expression element of the central concept. Surrounding and affecting the conceptual nucleus are peripheral factors: ethnic culture, regional culture, individual culture, etc.

2.2. The irradiation relation of the conceptual metaphor of blue in Vietnamese

In the light of cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor is "the way to see one object through another" [1; p.69]. Surveying linguistic resources, we found that the concept of blue plays a role as a source domain that moves attributes to other categories of ideas: human, social life and natural phenomena. The shift of concept blue to the concept of objects belonging to different target domain is summarized in Table 2.1 below:

Table 2.1. Conceptual movement of the blue source domain to the target domain in Vietnamese

The BLUE source domain	The target domain concept	Examples
the intensity and brightness	The positive scale of emotions, human emotions	<i>Blue dream; blue hope;</i> <i>And maybe the tears from that flower will flow into people's lives and hearts, sprouting blue hopes.</i> (Việt Anh, <i>Times plus.giadinh.net.vn</i>)
	The negative scale of emotions, human emotions	<i>Blue dream; blue hope;</i> <i>And maybe the tears from that flower bud will flow into people's lives and hearts, sprouting blue hopes</i> (https://vi.glosbe.com)
	Characteristics, properties of the object	<i>I, the youngster suit the action to the words.</i> (<i>Tôi non xanh uống cạn non xanh</i>) (Phạm Ngọc Cảnh, <i>Cỏ ngoài sông Đuống</i>) <i>And life is still blue</i> (Trịnh Nam Sơn, <i>Về đây em</i>)
	The role and value of the object	<i>Absolutely avoid putting "the substitute" into the negotiation, election to "pave the way". That is not called election democracy.</i> (https://giaoduc.net.vn/tieu-diem/tuong-thuoc-noi-ve-quan-xanh--quan-do-co-hoi-chinh-tri-trong-bau-cu-post166525.gd)
	The transformation and movement of the object	<i>A century dies and a younger century is born.</i> <i>I'm dead, the poetry will be greener after that.</i> (Chế Lan Viên, <i>Đoạn cuối thế kỷ</i>) <i>Immersed in the breath of the earth</i> <i>Blue will be large, will be long tomorrow.</i> (Hà Thiên Sơn, <i>Mưa đầu mùa</i>)
The impact of blue on human psychology	The characteristic of time perceived by humans	<i>Blue night; blue noon;</i> <i>Blue of the soil, full of sunshine.</i> (Chế Lan Viên, <i>Trưa dưới vòm cây</i>)

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Thus, the concept of blue with basic characteristics has become a "foundation" for Vietnamese people's understanding of social life, discovering themselves in different aspects. This also means that the source domain blue has irradiated to different target regions in the perception of the Vietnamese.

2.3. The model of blue conceptual metaphor in Vietnamese.

2.3.1 The conceptual metaphor of BLUE HOPE / ASPIRATION

Derived from the colour characteristics perceived by humans, the colour blue is associated with human cultural and spiritual life. Considered as the colour of nature, of growth, blue is associated with attributes that give people spiritual pleasures and, traditionally, it is the colour of hope. Studying the linguistic resources, we found that Vietnamese people tend to use blue words with different shades such as blue, dark blue, light blue, etc ... to express their beliefs, hopes, desires like blue hope, blue dream, blue aspiration, etc. Characteristic inherent properties of blue: freshness, low heat properties are projected onto the target domain in human thought - emotion, a sense of peace, lightness and certainty. Blue hope, bringing the tenacity spreads gently but earnestly. In Vietnamese, the blue colour of the sky is used to represent beliefs, hopes, and beautiful life at different levels associated with the specific properties of colour shades such as bluish, dark, etc. All contribute to the symbolic meaning of the blue colour to the highest level, shows the most complete of the emotional attributes in the target domain. Of the multitude of colors recorded in human thinking, choosing blue to express aspiration is universal. Because, blue is a familiar colour in life, associated with Vietnamese agricultural life. Therefore, using the color blue to suggest the persistence, the latent vitality of the passion is the expression of conceptual thinking in color in Vietnamese life:

(1) *Tomorrow from human footsteps*

Blue will be up with an open horizon

(Đình Nam Khương - Từ những vết chân người).

(2) *Expectations have gradually declined*

Aspiration is still green.

(Vũ Phán, *Hồ Xuân Hương*)

2.3.2. The conceptual metaphor of BLUE is sadness

Human perception of colour in general and in Vietnamese in particular, as the cognitive linguists have pointed out, is derived from humans experience themselves and thus it is the product of the combination of the optic nerve with the cognitive ability of the brain; it is not a combination of completely objective, independent cognitive abilities outside of the perceiving subject, but is created. from the real world "[5; p.80]. This shows the inseparability between psychology and physiology when "one type of stimulus can activate many perceptions of different senses, creating brain alliance" [5; p.81]. This feeling transformation mechanism forms the psychological and physiological basis for people to recognize things. Because of that, colours seem to have more depth, coldness, and heat. In the conceptual metaphor of SADNESS IS BLUE, when the source domain - blue maps onto the target domain EXCELLENCE, the selected characteristic is the specificity, associated with the negative tendency of emotion:

(3) *A pale hand welcomes the sorrow (Bàn tay xanh xao đón ưu phiền...)*

(Trịnh Công Sơn, *Nắng thủy tinh*)

(4) *The mountain stood still all afternoon. (Non xanh ngậy cả buổi chiều.)*

(Huy Cận – Thu rừng)

The metaphor of turquoise is inherent in Western culture. In modern English, "nhạc mau xanh lam" (green music) is a genre of music with a melancholy sound and lyrics (to describe the breakup). In Vietnamese, especially in poetry, the metaphor of sorrow associated with turquoise is associated with features such as softness, drooping, burning, moss, etc. The attribute of colour chroma is perceived by humans based on the corresponding "reactions" of the other senses: touch, hearing, taste, smell. Words and expressions belonging to this perceptual area have the symbolic value of a perceptual area that is as complex and abstract as human emotion. Sensory transformation forms the basis for the perception of the conceptual metaphor SADNESS IS BLUE in Vietnamese.

2.3.3. The conceptual metaphor of POSITIVE ACTIVITY IS BLUE

In Vietnamese, we still often encounter structures describing human activities and states in society such as green life, live in green life, etc. Human social activities are visualized and identified in association with specific colours. In other words, it is colour associated with basic properties that create the basis for the perception and evaluation of human activity. The above conceptual metaphors of people are universal. Mapping is based on the association between hue, luminance and activity properties; human activities with colour - activities that transform social life into the basis of constructing the conceptual metaphorical structure of colour. Therefore, the linguistic expressions expressing the conceptual metaphors of the colour of social activity appear quite popular. Vietnamese knowledge of bright colours (white, blue, pink ...) is the basis for the expression and perception of the nature and role of human social activities:

(5) *Joining hands with the community to turn life in green.*

(<https://dantri.com.vn/nhip-song-tre/chung-tay-cung-cong-dong-to-xanh-cuoc-song-20170204231038644.htm>)

(6) *Life is like leaves. The living must be green.*

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(<https://ngoisao.net/tin-tuc/choi-blog/cuoc-doi-hay-nhu-la-la-song-thi-phai-xanh-3330326.html>)

2.3.4. The conceptual metaphor of BEAUTIFUL LIFE / MEANINGFUL LIFE IS BLUE

Among countless colours, blue is considered "the deepest colour of all colours", "blue makes the shape of objects elegant, open, faded," "blue resolves itself in contradictions, interchange - such as alternating day and night - contradictions and alternations regulating people's lives." [3; p.1015 - 1016]. In the general perception of the Vietnamese people, green is considered as the colour associated with vitality, the proliferation of fruit trees, nature, and blue give the viewer a pleasant and peaceful feeling. Therefore, blue is often associated with something beautiful, rich in vitality. Surveying linguistic resources, we found that Vietnamese people tend to use the blue colour in association with the concept of LIFE to show how they perceive and evaluate values and positives in life. The characteristic properties: the freshness, the low heat of the blue, which is irradiated to the target of LIFE in human thought corresponding to the properties (beautiful, new, full of vitality ...), dimension (wide, long, deep ...) corresponding to the energetic attribute of life:

- (7) *Grass in the garden freshen at his feet
Life is still green as the leaf colour.*

(Tổ Hữu, Hãy nhớ lấy lời tôi)

- (8) *The Dai Doan Ket also contributed to the struggle for the green colour of life.*

(<http://daidoanket.vn/xa-hoi/vi-mau-xanh-cuoc-song-tintuc356136>)

2.3.5. GREEN IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

With the concept that GOOD IS UP, BAD IS DOWN, Vietnamese people have an awareness of the situation, assessing the trend of development or decline of the socio-economy in connection with the association "light up" or "darken" of colour. The state and direction of economic development are associated with the change in colour and intensity of specific colours. In Vietnamese culture, colours are classified according to groups based on the characteristics of hue, brightness, and heat. Accordingly, colours are sorted into two groups of colours: bright - dark, hot - cold. This cultural perception of colours becomes the basis for interpreting, analyzing and understanding complex objects in life. In the cultural life and language of Vietnamese people, very naturally, green is considered the colour of plants, attached to vitality, revival and development. Perceptual characteristics of hue, the brightness of green are activated, projected onto the ECONOMIC target by corresponding mappings: colour with freshness corresponds to "vitality", recovery, development of economy, expanding the sense of colour.

- (9) *Vietnam's economic picture in 2017 was not lacking in green colour, despite the slow recovery of the world and regional economies.*

(<http://cafef.vn/kinh-te-viet-nam-2018-lac-quan-than-trong-hanh-dong-tu-tin-20180101134916435.chn>)

- (10) *When the difficult days are still sweeping the banks, somewhere under the dry and rotten leaves in the winter, green sprouts of hope have sprouted!*

(<https://www.thesaigontimes.vn/119913/Nhung-mam-xanh-hy-vong.html>)

2.3.6. The conceptual metaphors of POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF TIME IS GREEN

The conceptual metaphors of the colour of time, people have used knowledge, daily experiences of colour to conceptualize time. This is a specific way for people to perceive the time, associated with the cultural characteristics of each country. Different cultures have different views of the time. In fact, we Vietnamese have applied our experience in colour perception, especially blue, to conceptualize time. In Vietnamese, with the metaphorical structural model, THE CHARACTERISTIC OF TIME IS COLOR, Vietnamese people have used the knowledge of colour to perceive different characteristics of time. COLOR with specific properties such as brightness, hue, heat, emotional impact, aesthetics ... are assigned to the concept of time. The mapping process is based on the corresponding association between the source and target concept domains that arise in the TIME target domain, new meaningful elements have quantitative, qualitative, properties, emotions, etc. And based on thinking, we infer and understand time. For example, we identify the multidimensional, fast - slow, long - short properties of time in association with the abundance of colours and hue in the palettes perceived in Vietnamese culture (blue afternoon, purple afternoon, blue night, pink night ...). We use the sense of colour to perceive the attribute of time (pure flavour of the time, purple colour of time, etc.). Accordingly, the sense of blue becomes the basis for the positive characteristic perception of time. Each attribute of time is perceived on the basis of the corresponding dominant attribute in the BLUE source domain:

- (11) *Night comes with blue night sea
Not black, the night of the sea is glittering far away.*

(Chế Lan Viên, Đêm về với biển)

- (12) *Hey, the stars, my childhood friends,
Heard it was cramped
The blue nights are overflowing tonight.*

(Chế Lan Viên, Người Bác sỹ)

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3. CONCLUSION

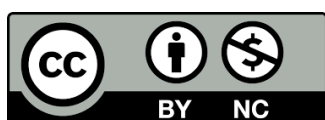
Surveying the conceptual metaphors of BLUE, we have provided more proofs to clarify conceptual metaphors of colour in Vietnamese. In the BLUE conceptual metaphors, the basic properties of the BLUE source domain are mapped onto different target domains: people, economic abstractions and natural phenomena. The analysis of the conceptual metaphor model of BLUE is expressed through typical metaphors: BLUE HOPE / ASPIRATION, BLUE SADNESS, BLUE BEAUTIFUL / MEANINGFUL LIFE, GREEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF TIME IS BLUE shows that human perception of the world is related to human perception and experience of the concept of colour. Hopefully, the achieved results will contribute to make clearer the Vietnamese people's thinking bases and cognitive processes about the world./

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