EXPLORING METAPHORICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF HOME AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE: A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: *The current study explores the metaphorical conceptualization of home and social relationships in the English and Vietnamese languages building on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as a conceptual background. Using a mixed-methods approach, this research has a mixture of qualitative interpretation of metaphorical language of corpora and dictionaries, and quantitative data of a survey based on 70 research participants (both native and bilingual). The results indicate culturally specific metaphoric patterns: Vietnamese metaphors tend to be architecture and nature-based (e.g., A FAMILY IS A HOUSE), and hence reflect the values of collectivism that require set predetermined hierarchy, security, and interdependence; contrastingly, English metaphors are journey, and emotional-based (e.g., LOVE IS A JOURNEY), and thus lead to individualism and development. Such metaphors are not only shaping means of expression in linguistics, they indicate more to the sociocultural cognition. The research has a certain value to cross-cultural cognitive linguistics as it can contribute insight regarding the mediation of cultural conceptions of belonging, identity, and interpersonal relationships through metaphor.*

Keywords: *conceptual metaphor theory, cultural cognition, home, metaphor, social relationships*

1. INTRODUCTION

Metaphors are not merely superfluous ornaments but basic devices that human beings use to construct the abstract experiences in terms of concrete realities. As proposed by Lakoff and Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), metaphor is inextricably present in our thinking, they determine not only language, but also perception and behavior. The areas of home and social relations are among the most metaphorically dense ones, as they are also fundamental to the personal identity, cultural values and emotional life.

The English and Vietnamese speaking communities are just one of the cultures that perceive the concept of home beyond the actual area, it encompasses the idea of emotional safety, social order, and family unity. On the same note, other social interactions including family, romantic and community relations can also be metaphorically perceived and interpreted as a way of gauging how individuals define their social environments.

According to recent findings (Vu, 2020; Nguyen, 2023), metaphorical associates of home and relationships are culturally created and frequently rooted in everyday day-to-day life events. In the example of Vietnamese metaphors, a chapter titled A FAMILY IS A HOUSE is not only an illustration of architectural mappings, such as a father is a roof or a husband is the pillar, but it also interprets some strong cultural values of hierarchy, stability, and collective prosperity. When a literal translation of metaphors such as "broken home" or "lay the foundation of a relationship" is made in the English language, they tend to be less spatial in their elaboration and more concerned with emotional centrality and

development of a relationship.

In spite of the growing interest in the studies of metaphors and CMT, there remains a gap in cross-cultural comparative studies the metaphoric domain involving culture as a source of metaphorical home and social relationships within the English-Vietnamese cross-cultural perspective. Further, the majority of the existing literature (1) describe cases in one particular language; or (2) are of anecdotal, non-systematic description supported by no empirical analysis.

Thus, this study aims to provide a contribution to the literature by examining English and Vietnamese conceptualization of home and social relationships in metaphorical terms with the help of the mixed-methods approach. It relies on both qualitative linguistic research and quantitative survey of bilingual and native speakers in order to compare key tenets of metaphor and evaluate how they are shaped by cultural values, embodied experience, and worldview.

The key **research questions** guiding this investigation are:

1. What are the dominant conceptual metaphors used to represent home and social relationships in English and Vietnamese?

2. How do these metaphors reflect underlying cultural values and cognitive patterns?

3. What are the implications of metaphorical differences for cross-cultural understanding?

The tendency towards the answers to these questions will allow the study not only to enlighten the linguistic forms of metaphor, but also its cognitive and cultural meaning. Finally, it brings out the aspect of metaphor as a medium that links language, thinking, and culture- a window through which one can look and find out cultural similarities and differences in how people conceptualize human relationships.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Foundations: Conceptual Metaphor Theory

CMT was proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). This theory posits that "metaphor is not merely a rhetorical device but a fundamental mechanism of thought" by which individuals imagine abstract realms on the basis of more tangible ones. This view of metaphor is based on the assumption that metaphor is "rooted in embodied experience" and relies on source domains such as space, movement, or physical structure in order to conceptualize more abstract concepts such as emotion, family, or social relationships (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Rohrer, 2007).

As Kövecses (2010) notes, metaphor helps us to understand things to which we have little or no access by way of re-mapping these onto things we can see or touch. These mappings are not universal, but are culturally and experientially determined.

The study of conceptual metaphor as evolved since the mainstream publications of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) signifying the core metaphoric nature of human thought and language. Follow up rescources have shown that metaphor is not a stylistic flourish in language, but a structural cognitive process by which abstract concepts are comprehended (Lakoff, 1993; Gibbs, 1994). Leveraging on this, Kövecses (2010) gave an in-depth description of the systematicity and cross-cultural felicity of metaphors, whereas Cameron and Low (1999) explored different pedagogical and discourse aspects of metaphor studies. Yu (1998) demonstrated how metaphorical thinking is influenced by cultural models in Chinese and once again, managed to suggest that metaphor is universal and yet culturally contingent.

Such wider researches form the conceptual framework that the current

study is constructed on Although most of the previous studies have covered a broad spectrum of domains, the scope of the present article limits itself to the particular areas of home and social relations. This narrowed down approach will be able to explore more into the details of how metaphorical representations in these two languages show reflection of cultural values.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this research is CMT. It analyzes metaphor as a window into cultural cognition, and studies metaphorical patterns as both systematic and meaningful. Following Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor is seen as "pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action" (p. 3). In this sense, metaphor demonstrates the manner in which people organize their cognition of abstract areas such as "home" and "relationships" through culturally and physically based experience.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is grounded in the theoretical presumptions of CMT and is structured around two primary target domains. The first is "home", which encompasses notions of space, identity, and security, while the second is "social relationships", which include love, family ties, and community bonds. Together, these domains provide a culturally embedded foundation for examining how metaphor shapes and reflects cognitive and social understandings across linguistic contexts. These are explored through the source domains of architecture (roof, wall, pillar in Vietnamese), journey (path, destination in English), unity (one soul, glue), and nature (tree, roots).

This study consists of analyzing a number of idioms, proverbs and metaphorical expressions in both languages to show how each culture conceptualizes home, relationships differently, depending on their values (e.g., collectivism vs. individualism).

2.4 Home and Family Metaphors in Vietnamese

The Vietnamese culture is especially salient in home and family metaphors. The metaphors that Vietnamese frequently rely on in organizing their perception of family and social relations are based on the tangible, daily life experience, particularly, on the notion of the house.

According to Vu (2020) "The conceptual metaphor A FAMILY IS A HOUSE is a typical conceptual metaphor of the family in Vietnamese (in comparison with other conceptual metaphors of the family in Vietnamese such as A FAMILY IS A BIRD'S NEST, A FAMILY IS A TREE, A FAMILY IS A COHESIVE UNIT). It reflects the distinctive cognition of Vietnamese people about the structure, durability and functions of the family" (p. 46).

Moreover, Vu (2020) says, "Seeing the family as a house, Vietnamese people usually use many linguistic forms belonging to the semantic field of houses such as house, roof, foundation, rooftop, pillar, wall, design, construction, leaking, cracks, damage, collapse, etc. to talk about the family" (p. 47). The semantic abundance of terms designating the house is projected onto the family relationships and roles, e.g., the father is the roof, the husband is the pillar, or the family is the basis of life.

In terms of mapping, as Vu (2020) states "In the conceptual metaphor A FAMILY IS A HOUSE, the source domain HOUSE provides knowledge of a house's features such as: having a design; being constructed carefully; having different parts such as ridge, roof, wall, ground, foundation, door, window, stairs, doorstep, paint, lime; having space: inside the house, outside the house, upstairs, downstairs; having different styles: high houses, low houses, 1-storey houses, multi-story houses, Thai-roof houses, etc" (p. 46).

Through these mappings, it is possible to know not only how the Vietnamese people view the structure and organisation of the family but also how they accord stability, safety, and social roles to the members of the family. Such as, the common idiom "Không cha nhà dột, cột xiêu" (Without father, the house roof is leaking, the pillar is sloping) demonstrates the process of mapping cultural beliefs concerning roles of family members onto the spatial and architectural aspects.

2.5 Idioms and Cultural Values in Social Relationships

Nguyen (2023) emphasizes the value of metaphor in understanding Vietnamese views on love and loyalty, stating that "Idioms are regarded as a form of a language that reflects cultural and national mentalities. For this reason, studying idioms about love is one of the best ways to uncover Vietnamese people's ideas about love (p. 856).

Among the significant metaphors is the metaphor of LOVE IS UNITY in which Nguyen (2023) indicates that "Unity in love represents one of the extremely important conditions that lead to sustainable love" (p. 859). Such a metaphor indicates collectivism and the principle of pleasant coexistence. As an example, the idioms used that refer to faithfulness and strong emotional tie include: "một lòng một dạ" (one mind one soul), "có thủy có chung" (be faithful in love), "tình sâu nghĩa nặng" (deep love intense gratitude), and "nát đá vàng phai" (broken stone and faded gold) .

As Nguyen (2023) concludes, "The value of faithfulness is the greatest measure of true love. There are several idioms in Vietnamese … which recognise the conclusive role of faithfulness in love" (p. 858). This observation highlights how Vietnamese culture conceptualizes love as inseparable from loyalty and moral duty. Such a view resonates with the collectivist orientation of Vietnamese society, where personal relationships are deeply tied to social and ethical responsibilities.

2.6 English Metaphors of Home and Relationships

In English, Home and relationship metaphors are also fairly common but tend to vary in their type and richness when compared to the Vietnamese language. Such examples as "broken home, the heart of the home, or "building a relationship" are widespread, although they tend not to project family roles onto physical structures in such detail. Rather they stress functionality, emotional centrality or relationship development.

The English language also has some metaphors of journey and construction to speak about relations processes, such as "crossroads in a relationship", "putting down roots, or laying the foundation of a partnership". These imply that relationships are processes or journeys, which conforms to more individualistic and developmental perspective of personal relationships.

2.7 Cross-Cultural Comparison and Gaps

The available literature demonstrates that the Vietnamese and English languages have experience-based and culture-based systems of metaphors. Nevertheless, "many studies address metaphor in one language", and "few offer a systematic cross-cultural analysis focusing specifically on 'home' and 'social relationship' metaphors in both English and Vietnamese".

Furthermore, as mentioned in the outline, "there is insufficient attention to differences by age, region, or social class in metaphor use", and "English data are often underrepresented or fail to contextualize within British/American/Australian cultures." The present research attempts to fill these gaps with the help of comparative, empirical, and culturally contextualized analysis.

The combination of native speaker data and linguistic analysis used in the current study aims not only to provide contrastive metaphorical systems, but moreover to display linguistic embodiment of cultural cognition across two typologically and culturally remote languages. Whereas the majority of the available research is based on textual analysis alone, the incorporation of empirical data of perception in the present study provides a more detailed and realistic picture of metaphorical cognition. Such a setup presents the study as a valuable addition to the field of metaphor research and cross-cultural cognitive linguistics.

2.8 Related Studies in Cross-Cultural Metaphor Research

A number of comparative studies have pointed to the importance of metaphor in communicating culturally entrenched mode of thinking. Kovecses (2015) explored the cross-cultural variations in metaphorical emotion patterns in that the English and Hungarian emotion patterns of anger, for example, are of different emotional expectations. On the same token, Yu (1998) has studied metaphorical phenomena in the Chinese and English languages and came to the conclusion that metaphor is a window to understanding the interpretation of human experience developed by culture. Recently, Vu (2020) and Nguyen (2023) extolled the substantial correlation between metaphor and collective values in the Vietnamese context. These remarks also confirm that metaphor is not only a decoration but also a focus of cultural cognition. A systematic analysis of Vietnamese and English metaphors in spheres of home and social relationships has, however, not been studied yet properly, and that is why it is justified to conduct a research on this topic.

Along with the work basic contributions of Kövecses (2015) and Yu (1998), recent advances in metaphor research also indicate how language, culture, and cognition are normally involved with one another dynamically. As a case in point, Charteris-Black (2004) points out about the rhetorical and the ideological functions of metaphor in a civic discourse with regard to indicating that there is a strategic use in employing metaphors to seal the missions of culture with discourse. Deignan (2005) combines corpus linguistics and metaphor theory explicitly to investigate patterns of metaphor usage in everyday discourse, and highlights the value of real-data in the study of metaphor.

In Southeast Asia, Nguyen (2012) started the contrastive study on a metaphor of power and compared Vietnamese and English political speeches and showed the influence of cultural values such as harmony, hierarchy, and directness on metaphors. Similarly, Le and Nguyen (2021) explored the use of metaphoric expressions in Vietnamese proverbs and idioms, and her investigation revealed that all of them majorly have their foundations in everyday life, nature, and family experience, which are rather close to collectivistic cultures.

All these researches confirm the thesis that metaphor is not only a linguistic phenomenon but also a manifestation of the socio-cultural cognition. Still, there are not many studies which systematically compare the metaphorical system of home and social relation in terms of typologically and culturally diverse languages such as English and Vietnamese. This study would seek to fill that gap by means of conceptual and empirical investigation.

Next, Charteris-Black (2004) focuses on the role of metaphor as an ideology in forming the discourse that is used in the public and political arena claiming that metaphors are usually used in a strategic way being done to persuade and to influence people. This coincides with the thoughts that metaphor is closely connected with cultural power schemes and communicative meanings. The

emphasis on empirical data that proves to be very important in the metaphor study is also evidenced by Deignan (2005), who bases his methodological principles on corpus linguistics, having identified the regular patterns of metaphoric phenomenon, as it occurs in actual use of language. These contributions justify methodological and conceptual decisions of the current study.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

To thoroughly examine metaphorical conceptualizations of "home" and "social relationships" across English and Vietnamese, this study adopted a mixed-methods design. Given the multifaceted nature of metaphor-as a linguistic, cognitive, and cultural construct-both qualitative and quantitative approaches were necessary.

The research design consisted of a qualitative conceptual analysis of metaphorical expressions using the framework of CMT (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), alongside a quantitative survey that assessed participants' familiarity with, emotional associations to, and cultural interpretations of selected metaphors. This dual approach enabled both in-depth theoretical insights and empirical verification, thereby bridging theory-driven metaphor studies with data-grounded cultural understanding.

In particular, the qualitative component was conducted through content analysis of collected metaphorical expressions in order to uncover the cultural values embedded in language. This strategy allowed the study to move beyond numerical tendencies and to explore in depth the meanings and cultural implications of specific expressions.

3.2 Participants

The research enrolled 70 participants who were grouped into three. Group A is comprised of 30 native Vietnamese speakers aged between 18 and 35, their assumption is

that a balance in representations of people in rural and urban regions is taken into consideration. Group B consisted of 30 native speakers of English (United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia) of age 18-40. Group C consisted of 10 Vietnamese-English bilinguals aged 20-35, whose responses lent a bilingual outlook and acted as the model on which cross- lingual interpretations were to be validated.

The respondents were picked through purposeful sampling and notified through educational communities and academic networks via the internet. Valuable ethical principles were employed: the informed consent was given, the research was anonymous and voluntary, and the information was processed with confidentiality.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

There were two main tools used:

3.3.1 Corpus Compilation of Metaphors

To establish a robust dataset for analysis, a total of 100 metaphorical expressions (50 in Vietnamese and 50 in English) were collected from idiom and proverb dictionaries, corpus-based sources such as COCA and the VTen Idioms Bank, as well as films, literature, and native speaker conversations.

These expressions were carefully filtered based on their relevance to home and social relationships, frequency of use, and cultural salience. The resulting set of metaphors formed the foundation for the metaphor mapping process and directly informed the design of the questionnaire items.

3.3.2 Questionnaire Design and Administration

The structured questionnaire comprised 28 Likert-scale items, which were organized under four key constructs: familiarity with metaphors, emotional association, cultural embedding, and interpretive flexibility.

Each construct contained seven items

measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Additional sections collected demographic information and offered open-ended prompts on metaphor interpretation. A pilot test was conducted with 6 bilingual participants to ensure clarity and cultural appropriateness.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 26). The analysis comprised descriptive statistics to determine the mean and standard deviation of each construct, independent-samples t-tests to assess differences in metaphorical familiarity and perception between native Vietnamese and native English speakers, and Pearson correlation tests to explore the interrelationships among the four constructs. This integrated analytical approach provided a comprehensive understanding of both the structural patterns underlying metaphor use and the subjective experiences that inform them across cultural contexts.

The methodology provides depth by means of analytical conceptual metaphor in combination with the empirical data compiled by the participants, as well as breadth, due to the opportunity to observe, explain, and compare patterns through linguistic and cultural systems.

Besides, the triangulation of data of the corpus, survey, and open-ended responses contributes to validity, credibility, and cultural contextualization of the findings, which makes the research not only methodologically effective but also theoretically informed.

Alongside descriptive statistics, qualitative interpretation was carried out to highlight the cultural significance of selected metaphorical expressions. Each idiom or proverb was examined in its linguistic and cultural context, and its metaphorical mapping was interpreted with reference to cultural models such as collectivism, hierarchy, and individualism. For example, idioms referring to the "house" in Vietnamese were analyzed not only as architectural images but also as reflections of family structure and social reputation. This combined approach allowed both quantitative trends and qualitative insights to complement each other.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics were calculated in order to determine how the participants responded to the four constructs namely Familiarity with Metaphors, Emotional Association, Cultural Embedding, and Interpretive Flexibility. As Table 1 demonstrates, mean scores of all constructs were concentrated at the middle of the 5-point Likert, which exemplifies a rather neutral attitude to metaphorical language to somewhat positive attitude.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Four Constructs (N = 70)

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Familiarity with Metaphors (Fam_Mean)	70	1.86	4.00	2.9857	.45251

Emotional Association (Emo_Mean)	70	1.57	4.29	3.0143	.56369
Cultural Embedding (Cult_Mean)	70	1.86	4.57	3.0041	.57090
Interpretive Flexibility (Flex_Mean)	70	2.00	3.86	2.9245	.49590
Valid N (listwise)	70				

The highest mean was recorded in the Emotional Association dimension (M = 3.01, SD = 0.56), suggesting that participants tended to feel emotionally engaged with metaphorical language. The lowest mean was observed in Interpretive Flexibility (M = 2.92, SD = 0.50), which may reflect challenges in interpreting metaphors in varied or unfamiliar cultural contexts. The relatively narrow standard deviations across constructs indicate moderate consistency in participant responses.

These descriptive patterns demonstrate an initial overview of how the respondents, overall, associate with metaphorical expression when it comes to the levels of recognition, emotional intensity, cultural signification and interpretive openness.
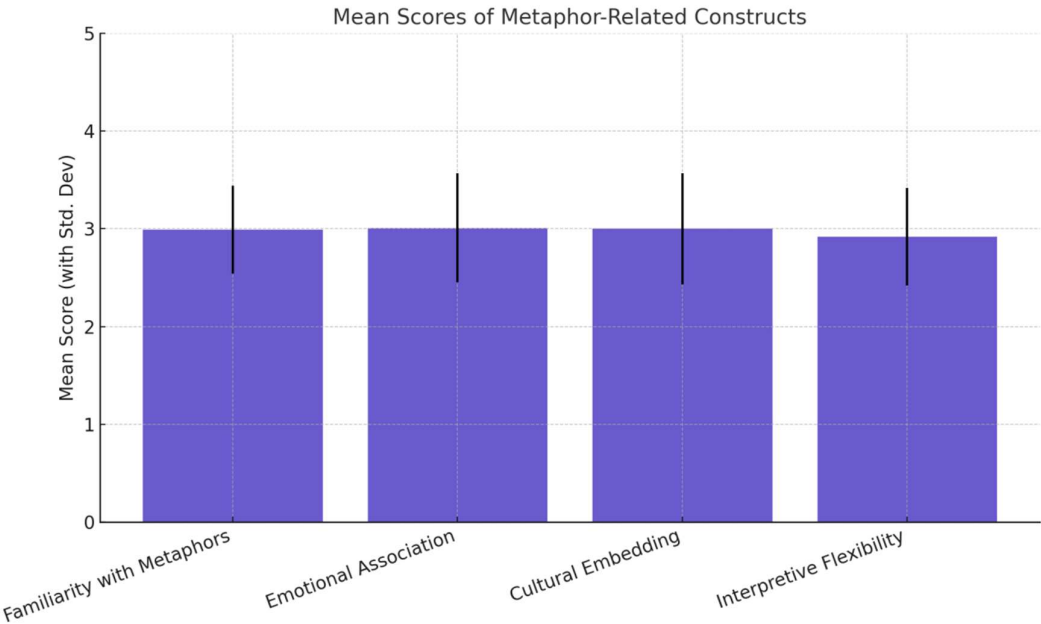

Figure 1. Mean Scores of Constructs with Standard Deviation

Mean scores and standard deviations for the four metaphor-related constructs. Emotional Association shows the highest mean, while Interpretive Flexibility is the lowest.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the interrelationships among the four measured constructs: Familiarity with Metaphors, Emotional Association, Cultural Embedding, and Interpretive Flexibility. The results are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Pearson Correlations between Constructs (N = 70)

Correlations		Fam_Mean	Emo_Mean	Cult_Mean	Flex_Mean
Fam_Mean	Pearson Correlation	1	-.094	-.220	-.023
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.438	.068	.848
	N	70	70	70	70
Emo_Mean	Pearson Correlation	-.094	1	-.183	.017
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.438		.129	.891
	N	70	70	70	70
Cult_Mean	Pearson Correlation	-.220	-.183	1	-.121
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.068	.129		.318
	N	70	70	70	70
Flex_Mean	Pearson Correlation	-.023	.017	-.121	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.848	.891	.318	
	N	70	70	70	70

None of the correlations reached statistical significance at the p < .05 level. The correlation coefficients were all low ($|r| < .30$), and some were near zero (e.g., $r = -.023$ between Fam_Mean and Flex_Mean), indicating a lack of linear association between the constructs.

These results indicate that the four dimensions measured are autonomous and different aspects of metaphorical thinking.

As an example, a familiarity of a subject with metaphors is not always an indicator of his emotional reaction towards them, and flexibility of interpreting them in different cultural settings. This once again leads to the opinion that the processing of metaphor is multi-dimensional phenomenon, in accordance with the premises of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).
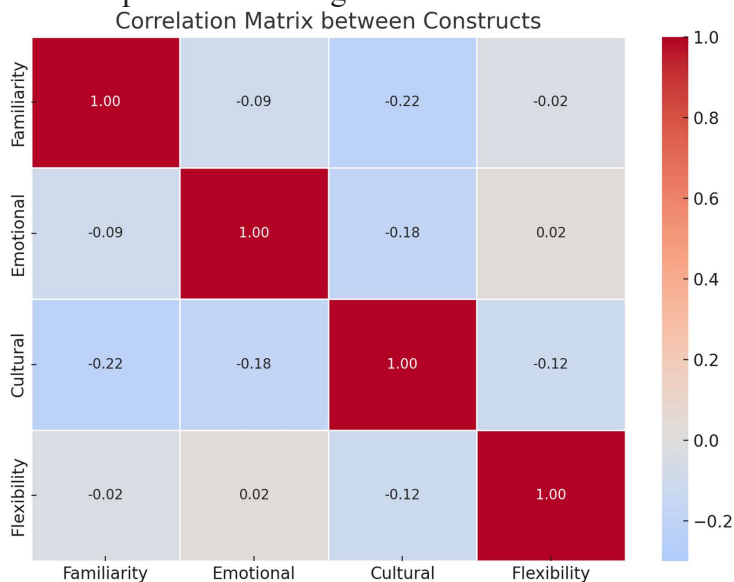

Correlation Matrix between Constructs

Figure 2. Correlation Matrix of Constructs

This heatmap shows the Pearson correlation coefficients between the four constructs, highlighting their relative independence and multidimensional nature in metaphor processing.

4.3 Independent-Samples T-test Analysis

To investigate potential linguistic-cultural differences in metaphorical perception, Independent-Samples T-tests were conducted comparing native Vietnamese speakers (Group 1, $n = 24$) and native English speakers (Group 2, $n = 21$) across four constructs.

The results are summarized in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Independent-Samples T-test Results by Native Language

Group Statistics

	NativeLang	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Fam_Mean	1	24	3.0774	.50372	.10282
	2	21	2.8844	.43241	.09436

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Fam_Mean	Equal variances assumed	.782	.382	1.369	43	.178	.19303	.14101	-.09134	.47739
	Equal variances not assumed			1.383	42.989	.174	.19303	.13956	-.08842	.47447

Group Statistics

	NativeLang	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Emo_Mean	1	24	3.0476	.58927	.12028
	2	21	2.9388	.57245	.12492

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Emo_Mean	Equal variances assumed	.031	.862	.626	43	.534	.10884	.17376	-.24157	.45926
	Equal variances not assumed			.628	42.506	.534	.10884	.17341	-.24100	.45869

Group Statistics

	NativeLang	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Cult_Mean	1	24	2.8571	.48946	.09991
	2	21	3.2177	.57253	.12494

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Cult_Mean	Equal variances assumed	.612	.438	-2.278	43	.028	-.36054	.15829	-.67976	-.04133
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.254	39.657	.030	-.36054	.15997	-.68395	-.03714

Group Statistics

	NativeLang	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Flex_Mean	1	24	2.9286	.53286	.10877
	2	21	2.9048	.50776	.11080

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Flex_Mean	Equal variances assumed	.044	.835	.153	43	.879	.02381	.15578	-.29035	.33797
	Equal variances not assumed			.153	42.666	.879	.02381	.15527	-.28939	.33701

Among the four constructs, only Cultural Embedding showed a statistically significant difference ($t(43) = -2.28$, $p = .028$), with English speakers scoring higher (M = 3.22) than Vietnamese speakers (M = 2.86). This suggests that native English speakers may be more attuned to culturally embedded metaphors in their language.

All the rest of constructs, such as Familiarity, Emotional Association, Interpretive Flexibility, failed to exhibit strongly varying closeness between the groups (p > .05), therefore, indicating similar tendencies of metaphor perception among the two linguistic groups in every other dimension.

4.4 Interpretation and Comparison of Metaphors

The Vietnamese metaphors depict a hierarchically and collectivistic world. Architectural metaphors stress upon the existence of the family as a strong, well-organized and permanent. The father image is developed as a structural feature which means accountability and backing up. Nature metaphors, including family tree or warm nest, are ways of expressing the aspects of embodiment and support.

On the contrary, in English it is common to have metaphors that stress movement, direction and uniqueness. The image of the journey in the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY is quite prominent and implies such an evolution in personal feelings and development. The English also think of relationships in terms of a journey as opposed to a structure. The emphases on change and self-determination are provided by the pre-existing metaphor as "we have grown out of touch" or "we have come to an end."

To show an example, the Vietnamese saying "nhà cao cửa rộng" (a tall house with wide doors) does not simply speak about a physical house, but also means wealth and high social status, thus the cultural importance of family reputation and stature is stressed. Similarly, the idiom "ấm cúng như cái tổ" (as cozy as a nest) also emphasizes how the home suggests comfort, warmth, safety, and group solidarity as a standard collectivist character in Vietnamese society.

English also has a strong tendency to express personal agency and personal autonomy metaphorically. The idiom "*a man's home is his castle*" illustrates the cultural emphasis on personal autonomy and privacy, while the metaphor "*to move on from a relationship*" underscores change and self-determination. These qualitative examples explain how the way metaphorical representations of the two languages are different not only in their image but also in the privileged cultural values.

Still another form of metaphor translation is the famous metaphor "duyên nợ" (predestined bond) in Vietnamese that readers can easily identify a romantic relationship as such that is not entirely at the discretion of individuals. The use of phrases like "tơ hồng" (the red thread) continue to enforce this type of cultural model, where love and marriage are simply destined and involve a sort of harmony and obligations that go beyond personal choices. All these metaphors denote the collectivist and spiritual nature of Vietnamese culture where relationships are considered interlaced with the family norms and the tradition.

4.5 Link to Theory and Cultural Values

Such results lead to some results supporting the principles of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) which states that metaphors are created based on lived bodily experiences and are influenced by sociocultural context. The Vietnamese metaphorical thinking is oriented toward spatial and concrete that is visual and to a certain degree also tactile metaphors, well in line with collectivist tendencies (filial piety, interdependence,

harmony in society). Conversely, English metaphors are more inclined to feelings and mind as opposed to values of individualism and selfhood, which are characteristic of the West.

The metaphor A FAMILY IS A HOUSE is not only the linguistic expression but it is the fundamental ideological concept of social roles, duty, and security. On the contrary, relationship metaphors such as LOVE IS A JOURNEY are metaphors of autonomy, which describe the relationships as an upstream option that is continually being determined by the individual paths.

4.6 Overview of Differences and Commonalities

Even though both English and Vietnamese people metaphorically conceptualize the idea of home and relations, the cultural representation is different:

Table 4. Cross-Cultural Conceptualizations of Home and Social Relationships

Aspect	Vietnamese	English
Dominant metaphor	A FAMILY IS A HOUSE	LOVE IS A JOURNEY
Emphasis	Stability, structure, social role	Emotional change, autonomy
Cultural logic	Collectivism, hierarchy	Individualism, self-direction
Concrete imagery	High (architecture, nature)	Moderate (movement, emotion)

These contrasts affirm that metaphor is not fixed but context-dependent that the culturally distinctive mode in which people see, appraise and structure their emotive and relational worlds.

When viewed in this light metaphor is more than a convenient linguistic tool, it is a cultural compass, that carefully navigates people on the way they think about belonging, intimacy and identity. This division of discrepancy between Vietnamese and English metaphorical system throws light on the unspoken, but influential involvement of metaphor in determining not only manner of our utterance, but our thoughts, emotions and actions in the universe.

Altogether, this research exposes the role of metaphor, not only as a linguistic construct but as a culturally rooted psychological process. The fact that analysis of metaphors is complemented by quantitative survey as it illustrates the significance of cultural cognition within the language and thus metaphor is an important mode of interface into cross-cultural conceptualization models.

4.7 Pedagogical and Social Implications

The implications of this study are pedagogical mainly on the intercultural communication and language teaching. One of the possible solutions might be to include metaphor awareness in teaching practices as an approach that would foster the pragmatic competence of the learners and their cultural literacy. Moreover, social comprehension of metaphors is possible to resolve stereotypes and miscommunication as they are caused by literal or culture-bound meanings. In a case such as the metaphor of "trụ cột gia đình" in the Vietnamese culture, responsibility and authority of this type has a lot of depth to it, and this significance may not necessarily correlate to the perception of similar instances within the Western learners. These insights have the potential of enhancing the cross-cultural understanding by making education more culturally responsive.

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4.8 Sociolinguistic and Cognitive Interpretations

In addition to the cultural connotation, metaphorical manifestation of home and social relationships is also important as a source of insight on embodied cognition and sociolinguistic identity. Rohrer (2007) indicates that metaphors are rooted to spatial and bodily experience and so it is a forceful emotional and relational meaning encoding device. Spatial metaphors used in Vietnamese context, like gốc rễ (first roots) and mái ấm (warm roof), are metaphors not merely linguistic tools but also acknowledged profound beliefs on belonging, multi-generational relations and emotional safety.

Sociolinguistically, use of metaphor may also serve an identifying, social slotting and affiliation purpose. Bilingual speakers especially have a tendency of moving between metaphorical structures of two cultures, and picking and choosing phrases that are familiar and meaningful to others. As such, one may use the Vietnamese-English bi-lingual; one may use the term: "broken home" in English settings and the term: "trụ cột gia đình" in Vietnamese settings, depending on which cultural norms they are utilizing. This is what such choices note about metaphor as a location of cognitive mobility and cultural negotiation.

This sociocognitive perspective makes strong the case that metaphors are not only stylistic traits but play a pivoting role in how persons think, feel, and interact with others in their cultural worlds.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Findings

This research has discussed the metaphorical conceptualizations of home and social relationships in English and Vietnamese based not only on linguistic analysis but also on data gathering processes. Using CMT frame, the study revealed how metaphorical expressions can act not only as a means of language but also as ways of cognitive and cultural representations.

The results denoted a number of different types of metaphors in the two languages. The Vietnamese culture uses architectural and natural images most of the time in their metaphor to think about family and relationships, and this reflects their values of stability, hierarchical system and collectivism. English-speaking people, on the contrary, apply journey- and emotion-accounting metaphors that presuppose autonomy, emotional developments, and individualism. Although both linguistic systems rely on metaphor to impose an experience of love, belonging, and kinship, the cultural logic of such manifestations varies extensively.

The ability to integrate quantitative findings with qualitative insights created an efficient level of understanding and revealed the emotional connection and interpretation of these metaphors of a participant. Such metaphors as "Không cha nhà dột, cột xiêu" and "broken home" were explained as touching the common emotional and social premises with the respective culture groups.

Such a contrastive view of metaphor emphasizes the idea of metaphor as a bridge of cognition reflective of and reinforced by more culturally precise and specific modes of thinking about social life. It also highlights the usefulness of metaphor research in interpreting not only linguistic applications but also the social or cultural structures and cognition.

Regarding these findings, further research can focus on extending the study to another cultural and linguistic phenomenon, examining age- or region-specific observations, or using metaphor analysis in the case of immediate discourse. This paper will be a further addition to a growing literature of cross-cultural cognitive linguistics through providing

a more detailed insight into the way in which metaphor itself is constructed and constructed by the cultural worlds we all live in.

5.2 Implications

The results of this research have a number of implications to theoretical as well as practical fields. On the one hand, the analysis supports the significance of CMT as a cross cultural analytical tool. It proves that metaphor is not only a cognitive but also a cultural instrument by the means of which people perceive such abstract realms like home and relations with people. Secondly, according to the research, metaphor awareness is what should be introduced into the curriculum of language studies, especially in bi-cultural or cross-cultural environments. Knowledge of metaphorical patterns would improve the pragmatic competences of learners and their levels of intercultural sensitivity. Lastly, the research drives cultural linguistic by providing empirical information on the assertion that cultural embeddedness and context-sensitivity characterise metaphorical thinking.

Recent studies have emphasized the importance of teaching metaphor explicitly in EFL/ESL contexts to enhance learners' conceptual and communicative skills (Littlemore & Low, 2022).

Intercultural competence is more than the knowledge of the language, and it involves sensitivity to the culturally based concepts like metaphorical thinking, as Dervin and Gross (2021) contend. The development of critical cultural literacy in language learning can be thus achieved by raising awareness among the learners of metaphorical differences across cultures.

5.3 Limitations

Although this is a methodologically sound study, the study has a number of limitations. The sample size, despite being adequate in exploratory purposes, may not fully represent the broader English and Vietnamese-speaking populations. In addition, these metaphorical expressions used in the analysis were mostly selected based on dictionaries, body of texts and responses of the participants which can be assumed to avoid informal or emerging metaphors that may be in use in digital or youth language. Also, although the study was aimed at capturing the home and relationship metaphors used, it lacked the variables of gender, age or socio-economic background, which can determine how the metaphors are used and, therefore, interpreted.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

This paper can be extended in a number of ways in the future. Further investigation of demographic variables and their impact on metaphorical cognition might benefit from a bigger variety and number of the participants involved. One additional approach that researchers can take is to look at metaphorical language during occurrence of discourse in real-life, including social media conversations, interviews, or conversation in classrooms to capture the context-relational use of metaphors. Besides, the extension of the use of these analytical concepts to the other areas of culture, like education, health, or politics could enhance the realm and the sphere of the cross-cultural metaphor research. Lastly, involving experimental or neurological means can assist in proving and enhancing some theoretical statements regarding embodiment and mental performance of metaphor in different languages.

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Note

The author declares no competing interests.

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APPENDIX A. FULL SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey Questionnaire

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. What is your native language?

☐ Vietnamese

☐ English

☐ Other: _____

2. What is your age group?

☐ Under 18

☐ 18–25

☐ 26–35

☐ Over 35

3. What is your current residence?

☐ Urban

☐ Rural

☐ Suburban

4. If not a native English speaker, what is your level of English proficiency?

☐ Basic

☐ Intermediate

☐ Advanced

☐ Near-native

Section 2: Familiarity with Metaphorical Expressions

Please rate your familiarity with the following metaphorical expressions.

Likert Scale: 1 = Not familiar at all | 2 = Slightly familiar | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Familiar | 5 = Very familiar

No.	Metaphorical Expression	Familiarity (1–5)
1	"Không cha nhà dột, cột xiêu"	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5
2	"Trụ cột gia đình"	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5
3	"Một lòng một dạ"	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5
4	"Broken home"	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5
5	"We're at a crossroads"	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Section 3: Interpretation & Cultural Values

6. How would you explain the meaning of the metaphor "A FAMILY IS A HOUSE"?

_____

7. What does the metaphor "LOVE IS A JOURNEY" suggest to you?

_____

8. How strongly do you associate the following values with family/love metaphors in your culture?

Likert Scale: 1 = Not at all | 2 = Slightly | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Strongly | 5 = Very strongly

Value	Rating (1–5)
Stability and order	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5
Emotional growth	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5
Family hierarchy	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5
Loyalty and unity	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5
Individual autonomy	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

Section 4: Reflective Responses

9. In your native language, can you share a metaphor or idiom related to home or family?

_____

10. Do you think metaphors about family and love reflect your cultural values? Why or why not?

_____

Section 5: Likert-Scale Items

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Likert Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

Construct 1: Familiarity with Metaphors

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
I am familiar with idiomatic expressions related to family.					
I often use metaphors when talking about relationships.					
I recognize common metaphorical phrases in my native language.					
I have heard expressions like "trụ cột gia đình" or "broken home."					
I can understand metaphorical meanings without needing explanation.					
I have learned metaphors from media, books, or conversations.					
I can easily identify metaphorical language in daily life.					

Construct 2: Emotional Association

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
Metaphors about home evoke strong emotions for me.					
I feel emotionally connected to metaphors about love and family.					
Certain metaphors remind me of my personal experiences.					
I associate metaphorical expressions with feelings of safety or belonging.					
Metaphors help me express emotions that are hard to describe literally.					
When I hear a metaphor, I relate it to my own emotions.					
Emotional metaphors feel more powerful than literal statements.					

Construct 3: Cultural Embedding

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
Metaphors about home reflect cultural values in my society.					
I can see how idioms show respect for family in my culture.					
The way people use metaphors shows what they believe in.					
Cultural traditions influence how metaphors are formed.					
I notice different metaphorical expressions between cultures.					
I believe metaphors reveal deep-rooted cultural mindsets.					
My native metaphors express ideas tied to my heritage.					

Construct 4: Interpretive Flexibility

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
The meaning of a metaphor can vary depending on the person.					
I can think of multiple meanings for the same metaphor.					
I enjoy interpreting metaphors in different contexts.					
The same metaphor may have different meanings across cultures.					
Some metaphors are open to various emotional interpretations.					
I believe metaphor meaning depends on the listener's background.					
Metaphors are flexible and not fixed in meaning.					

KHÁM PHÁ CÁC BIỂU TRƯNG ẨN DỤ VỀ NHÀ VÀ CÁC MỐI QUAN HỆ XÃ HỘI TRONG TIẾNG ANH VÀ TIẾNG VIỆT: MỘT GÓC NHÌN VĂN HÓA

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Tóm tắt: *Nghiên cứu này khám phá cách thức khái niệm hóa ẩn dụ về "nhà" và các mối quan hệ xã hội trong tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt, dựa trên nền tảng lý thuyết ẩn dụ khái niệm (Conceptual Metaphor Theory – CMT). Sử dụng phương pháp hỗn hợp (mixed-methods), nghiên cứu kết hợp giữa phân tích định tính các ẩn dụ trong ngôn ngữ từ các kho ngữ liệu và từ điển, cùng với dữ liệu định lượng thu thập từ bảng khảo sát 70 người tham gia nghiên cứu (bao gồm người bản ngữ và người song ngữ). Kết quả chỉ ra các khuynh hướng ẩn dụ mang tính văn hóa đặc thù: ẩn dụ trong tiếng Việt có xu hướng dựa trên hình ảnh kiến trúc và thiên nhiên (ví dụ: GIA ĐÌNH LÀ NGÔI NHÀ), phản ánh các giá trị tập thể như trật tự tôn ti, an toàn và sự phụ thuộc lẫn nhau; ngược lại, các ẩn dụ trong tiếng Anh chủ yếu mang tính hành trình hoặc cảm xúc (ví dụ: TÌNH YÊU LÀ MỘT HÀNH TRÌNH), hướng đến chủ nghĩa cá nhân và sự phát triển bản thân. Các ẩn dụ này không chỉ là phương tiện biểu đạt trong ngôn ngữ học, mà còn phản ánh nhận thức xã hội – văn hóa sâu sắc. Nghiên cứu mang lại giá trị cho lĩnh vực ngôn ngữ học tri nhận liên văn hóa, khi cung cấp cái nhìn sâu hơn về cách văn hóa trung gian định hình nhận thức về sự gắn bó, bản sắc, và các mối quan hệ giữa con người thông qua ẩn dụ.*

Từ khóa: *ẩn dụ, các mối quan hệ xã hội, lý thuyết ẩn dụ khái niệm, nhà, nhận thức văn hóa*

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Ghi chú

Tác giả xác nhận không có tranh chấp về lợi ích đối với bài báo này.