

METAPHORIC REPRESENTATION OF THE CONCEPT “LOVE” IN ENGLISH AND CHINESE

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The study provides an in-depth contrastive analysis of the conceptual metaphors of love in Chinese and English, exploring their similarities and differences through cognitive, cultural, and historical lenses. Drawing on the conceptual theory of metaphor [1], the research examines British poems and a wide range of Chinese literary works to identify common metaphorical patterns. They include «LOVE IS A JOURNEY», «LOVE IS A CONTAINER», «LOVE IS A FLAME» and others. These shared metaphors reflect universal human experiences and cognitive processes that transcend cultural boundaries. They are rooted in common physiological and psychological bases, as well as shared physical and social experiences, such as the concept of love as a journey or as a physical force.

However, distinct cultural contexts also shape unique expressions in each language. Chinese metaphors often incorporate agricultural references (e.g. «LOVE IS A SILKWORM») and are deeply influenced by Taoist and Confucian values, emphasizing harmony and balance (e.g. «LOVE IS THE MOON»). In contrast, English metaphors are shaped by Greco-Roman traditions, Judeo-Christian concepts, and modern influences, often highlighting passion and intensity (e.g. «LOVE IS FIRE»). Historical and social contexts further influence the evolution of love metaphors. For instance, ancient Chinese metaphors often relate to nature and seasons, reflecting cultural harmony with the environment, while modern Chinese expressions incorporate technological references (e.g. «LOVE IS A MOBILE PHONE BATTERY»). Similarly, historical events in the West, such as the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution, have influenced the development of love metaphors in English.

The study concludes that while love metaphors in Chinese and English share common cognitive foundations, they are uniquely shaped by cultural, historical, and linguistic contexts. Understanding these similarities and differences not only enriches our knowledge of cross-cultural communication but also provides insights into the diverse ways humans conceptualize and express one of the most fundamental human emotions. Future research may explore the dynamic evolution of love metaphors in the digital age and their implications for intercultural understanding and global communication.

References

1. **Lakoff, G.** *Metaphors We Live By* / G. Lakoff, M. Johnson. – Chicago : University of Chicago Press. – 193 p.