

CULTURAL METAPHORS IN AMERICAN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE SHOP SIGNS

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Abstract: Shop signs play an important role in the time of global trade and tourism. Previous studies have reached general conclusions about the characteristics, expressions, and functions of shop sign language. This study aims to explore the cultural, pragmatic, and social concepts encoded in shop sign language through cultural metaphors. The data was collected and observed from American and Vietnamese contexts respectively. The cultural conceptualizations embedded in the linguistic expressions are discovered by metadiscourse analysis and then generalized in the form of cognitive (metonymy) models that underpin the understanding of the cultural metaphors. The results show significant differences between the two speech communities in cultural metaphors related to customers, business scale, business identity, product origin, relationship, and quality. The study contributes specific theoretical and practical insights into English and Vietnamese shop signs from the perspective of cultural cognition, thus providing a base for analyzing coding phenomena at the level of cultural conceptualization contact and intercultural pragmatics.

Keywords: Cultural cognition, cultural conceptualization, cultural metaphor, American English-Vietnamese contrastive analysis, shop sign

1. Introduction

In the process of globalization, there has been an increasing number of international visitors in Vietnam's tourist areas and commercial centers. The shop sign language has always been subject to cultural contact with constant changes in code switching or code mixing to allow for the accessibility of different speech communities around the world. Many studies on shop signs from the perspective of social linguistics and contact linguistics rely on these aspects to assess the level of indigenous cultural preservation and the degree of cultural integration in a geographic area (e.g. Akindele, 2011; Thongtong, 2016; Zimny, 2017; Phan & Starks, 2019).

However, cultural contact in shop sign language should not only lie in the semiotics but also in the interaction and reconstruction of cultural conceptualizations that take place in speech communities' perception. This type of interaction belongs to what cultural linguistics calls "cultural cognition," a form of systematically interactive cognition between individuals and the community that underpins understanding of linguistic characteristics as experiences to be shared, applied, and reconstructed.

When it comes to studying language from the cognitive approach, the conceptual analysis of metaphorical models cannot be ignored. Metaphors from the perspective of cultural linguistics are called "cultural metaphors." They are derived from and based on traditional metaphors and conceptual metaphors while having their own approaches and methods of analysis towards the dialectical relationship between the components and the whole cognition of a speech community.

This study aims to investigate the cultural conceptualizations encoded in (American) English and Vietnamese shop signs through cultural metaphors, thereby contributing a methodology for specific analysis of cultural expressions and contacts between the two languages on the level of cultural cognition. The research questions include:

- (1) What are the cultural metaphors entrenched in the language use of English and Vietnamese shop signs?
- (2) What are the cultural cognitive models that explain the cultural conceptualizations underlying such cultural metaphors?
- (3) What are the cultural metaphor variations between the two speech communities?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cultural cognition

According to Frank (2015, p. 494), cultural cognition is a multidisciplinary concept that involves the type of perception beyond human awareness, that is, existing objectively, naturally, and dynamically in the interactive world where humans are the main subject that both influence and at the same time are influenced by the cultural cognition in thinking, behavior, and language.

On the theoretical basis of cognitive science, Sharifian (2017, pp. 3-5) formulate the concept of cultural cognition with the properties of being enactive, unevenly distributed, and dynamic. In other words, cultural cognition of a speech community is formed by the process of human's linguistic and social interaction through space and time; almost never shared equally among the members; and can be agreed upon or re-agreed upon through generations and interaction with other speech communities. Sharifian (2017, pp. 4-5) explains that cultural cognition can act as a CAS (a complex adaptive system) with emergent, nested, and open properties, corresponding to the characteristics of cultural cognition in the relationship between a speech community and its members.

In addition, Sharifian (2017) and previously Goodenough (1957) both emphasize the key influential role of member components in developing, distributing, and strengthening cultural cognition; and at the same time, a member's language use is influenced and shaped to varying degrees by the cultural cognition of that speech community. However, it should be noted that the general manifestations of the whole system are not the sum of the manifestations from member entities, nor are the manifestations of each member entity representative of the whole system. Frank (2015, p. 497) argues that the study of cultural cognition as such type of "distributed cognition" has opened opportunities for effective exchange between scholars in the humanities and subdisciplines of cognitive science.

In short, the concept of "cultural cognition" is constructed based on the theoretical foundations of many other fields, such as cognitive psychology, complexity science, distributed cognition, and anthropology.

2.2 Cultural conceptualizations

Conceptualization is the process of conceptual formation. A "concept" is generally thought to be the unit of human consciousness, reflecting not only the basic properties and relationships of things and phenomena in objective reality (i.e. definitions) but also the subjective human perception of those objects (Langacker, 1987; Ly, 2008; Tran, 2011; Nguyen, 2015). The

scholars argue that a “concept” is both universal (reflecting the objective world) and specific (relating to the cultural and linguistic characteristics of a speech community). Langacker (1987) advocates that the formation of a concept requires a contextual background called a “domain” or a “cognitive field” on which certain features of things and phenomena become “focuses” for the concepts to be separated and formed. Thus, conceptualization and its products (concepts) are constantly changing between different cognitive fields and different attention stimuli of different communities, eventually encoded in different linguistic systems.

Conceptualization is intrinsically cultural, forming cultural concepts and is therefore called “cultural conceptualization.” The culturalism of cultural conceptualizations manifests itself in the fact that the focus of attention to objective things is shared and passed on among members of a speech community. These focuses are also the result of the whole community’s selection among a wide range of attention focuses belonging to the perception of its members as well as other stimuli across space and time. Thus, it can be said that cultural conceptualizations themselves are also products of cultural cognition with enactive, distributed, and dynamic characteristics. Sharifian (2011, 2015, 2017) asserts that many aspects of language structure and language usage entrench and reflect cultural conceptualizations; but language is simultaneously an environment in which cultural cognition is structured and restructured through human linguistic and social interaction, thereby creating the development of cultural conceptualizations.

2.3 Cultural metaphors

According to the traditional view from the time of Aristotle (384-322 BC), metaphor is considered the main mode of enlarging vocabulary based on the similarities between things and phenomena and is the basis for rhetorical, synonymous, and polysemantic means. Therefore, it can be said that metaphor is a typical characteristic of language. On the other hand, metaphor is also a mode of conceptualization. The linguistic expressions of metaphors that differ between speech communities represent the divergence of different systems of cultural conceptualization. However, the tool for approaching and analyzing (cultural) conceptualizations is only fully developed at the stage of “conceptual metaphor” with “mappings,” which present a form of conceptualization that describes or understands a target domain through a source domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff & Turner, 1989).

From the perspective of cultural linguistics, an individual’s cognition within a community is influential and contributing, but not entirely reflective of the cognition of that community. For example, the conceptual metaphors within the scope of an author’s works reflect only part of the cultural cognition of the speech community in which he is a member while simultaneously contributing to it. Thus, Sharifian (2017) uses the term “cultural metaphor” for the metaphors constructed in the interaction between members of a community across space and time, in the same way that parts or entities influence and are influenced by the general characteristics of a system in the form of a CAS (complex adaptive system).

Sharifian (2017) advocates that cultural metaphors are essentially conceptual metaphors derived from community elements; built and shared among members in the form of traditional experiences and cultures such as history, religion, beliefs, folktales, etc. For instance, TRỜI ĐƯỢC XEM LÀ CÔNG ĐẠO ‘sky as justice’ is a common cultural metaphor in Vietnamese, as expressed in *Trời sẽ không tha người bất nghĩa* ‘the sky will not spare unrighteous people;’ *Ăn ở ác coi chừng trời đánh* ‘those living evilly watch out for sky lightning;’ *Ông trời có mắt* ‘Mr. Sky has eyes.’

Sharifian (2017, p. 18) argues that the conceptual metaphors of later generations also often have deep cultural manifestations, and that recent studies on conceptual metaphor theory are more culturally relevant than previous ones. It is obvious that that many cognitive linguists studying conceptual metaphor theory have been shifting to approaches of cultural linguistics.

However, between conceptual metaphors and cultural metaphors there is a slight difference in perception paradigm. Conceptual metaphors focus on the nature of mechanical and local transitions from one conceptual domain to another through mappings. When conceptual metaphorical models are established, activated, and applied, it is the movement of the subject itself as a whole. Meanwhile, cultural metaphors focus on the nature of sharing and transferring (i.e. distributed cognition); conceptual domains are understood through each other by the experience and pre-existing common knowledge of the speech community that Wa Thiong'o (1986) and scholars of cultural linguistics call the “collective memory bank.” Thus, cultural metaphorical models are less considered in terms of equivalent conceptual transformation but are often described by a sequence of objective cognitive processes that affect the attention focus of conceptualizations. Accordingly, instead of using “is” (emphasizing the cognitive equivalence) for cognitive models as in conceptual metaphor theory (e.g. THE HEART IS THE RULER OF THE BODY), Sharifian (2017) suggested using “as” (emphasizing the cognitive influence and distribution) in standard cultural metaphor model for cultural linguistics (e.g. THE HEART AS THE RULER OF THE BODY).

3. Methodology

The study aims to explore similarities and differences in cultural cognition (cultural conceptualization) associated with the cultural metaphors in English and Vietnamese shop signs. Therefore, it utilizes qualitative methods such as analysis, synthesis, reference, theory construction based on shop sign language data as well as other related cultural, social, historical, and psychological evidence.

3.1 Research subjects and scopes

The subject of the study is shop sign language in written form visibly presented outside a business facility. These subjects are examined within the scope of the pragmatic cultural schema of ‘advertising’ as a foundation of understanding for specific speech acts/events associated with cultural categories or pragmemes that are specifically expressed by pragmatic acts, including certain linguistic expressions encoding some cultural metaphors (Table 1).

Table 1. Components of the pragmatic cultural schema of ‘advertising’

Pragmatic cultural schema of ADVERTISING					
Speech acts/events					
<i>emphasizing the focus of the business</i>	<i>describing the scale of the business</i>	<i>emphasizing the identity of the business</i>	<i>ensuring the reliability of quality</i>	<i>expressing credibility</i>	<i>showing outstanding qualities</i>
Cultural categories as Pragmemes					
CUSTOMER	SCALE	IDENTITY	ORIGIN	RELATIONSHIP	QUALITY
Linguistic expressions as Pragmatic acts					
[gender, job, class]	[small/medium, large]	[brand name]	[domestic, foreign]	[kinship, friend, love]	[healthy, affordable]
Cultural metaphors					

The components of the pragmatic cultural schema of ‘advertising’ mentioned above are universally potential in shop sign language (Kathpalia, 1992; Bhatia, 2005; Pham, 2021); yet some variation might be observed due to the divergence in the system of cultural conceptualizations between different speech communities.

3.2 Data collection

With the help of the Street View tool on Google Maps, images of English and Vietnamese shop signs were observed from various US states and major cities of Vietnam (mostly in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi). In addition, the shop sign language was also collected from shared images on google.com, alamy.com, yelp.com, and from images taken by our phones. The observed subjects were recorded by Google Maps volunteers and the websites over the years between 2013 and 2023. The final data include 1,748 (American) English and 1,585 Vietnamese shop signs.

3.3 Data analysis

Metadiscourse analysis was used to discover and evaluate the cultural conceptualizations encoded in some special or repeated language units called “linguistic markers.” Sharifian (2017, p. 45) argues that these markers are a combination of (i) associated community experiences in terms of meaning and usage, (ii) meaning and function in specific communication contexts, and (iii) the relationship between perceiving and evaluating meanings as a conceptualization.

Based on the identified conceptualizations, several cultural metaphors were presented and analyzed using cognitive models, especially those of “cognitive metonymy.” Lakoff & Johnson (1980), Kövecses & Radden (1998), and Barcelona (2003) contend that cognitive metonymy acts as “motivation” or conceptualized form of metaphor as well as cultural metaphor, and cognitive metonymy also diverges between different speech communities (i.e. systems of cultural conceptualization), reflecting different widely accepted cognitive principles (i.e. cultural cognition). Some of the basic models of cognitive metonymy underlying the analysis of metaphorical models are based on the interchange between concepts such as WHOLE and PART, CATEGORY and PROPERTY, HUMAN and NON-HUMAN, CONCRETE and ABSTRACT, INTERACTIVE and NON-INTERACTIVE, MORE and LESS, IDEAL and NON-IDEAL, etc. (Kövecses & Radden, 1998).

Each general expression from the description of the English cultural metaphors was compared with possible equivalent expressions in Vietnamese to detect some similarities and differences in the way things and phenomena of the same type are perceived and conceptualized between the two languages. In addition, cultural concepts associated with the cultural metaphors were systematized from many other reference sources in cultural, historical, psychological, and social perspectives. While similarities are seen as supportive points in intercultural communication, differences are seen as things to be learned and given special attention (Lado, 1957; Gass & Selinker, 2008).

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘customers’

4.1.1 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘gender’

In Vietnamese shop signs, *nam nữ* ‘male-female’ is often used to indicate the entire general customers (e.g. *Thời trang nam nữ* ‘male-female fashion;’ *Tạo mẫu tóc nam nữ* ‘male-female hairstyling’). This cultural metaphor originates from Vietnamese expressions with pairs

of extremes or closely-related words placed in reciprocal positions to evoke the perception of the whole category or range of things (Nguyen, 2011; Nguyen, 2018). For example, *Nam-thanh-nữ-tú* ‘male-young-female-beautiful’ (referring to the majority of beautiful young men and ladies); *Trong-ấm-ngoài-êm* ‘inside-sound-outside-safe’ (describing everything and everywhere warm, happy, and peaceful); *Trên-đề-dưới-búa* ‘above-anvil-below-hammer’ (indicating the difficult situation in which obstacles seem to appear everywhere).

Such pairs as *nam nữ* ‘male-female,’ *trong ngoài* ‘inside-outside,’ and *trên dưới* ‘above-below’ when used as a separate unit also express the whole category or range, as in *Chuyện tình cảm nam nữ* ‘romantic relationship of male-female’ (love between men and women), *Trong ngoài đều yên ổn* ‘the inside-outside are all peaceful’ (everything is in good condition), *Trên dưới đều một lòng* ‘the above-below are all one heart’ (people of all ranks altogether agree). It can be seen that this practice has existed for a long time in the Vietnamese language system and has been passed down to many generations through idioms or proverbs in everyday speech.

Therefore, the conceptualization entrenched in the cultural metaphor related to combination between the genders in Vietnamese shop signs can be presented as follows:

- (1) COMMON OVER LESS COMMON > PART FOR THE WHOLE > TWO EXTREME MEMBERS FOR THE WHOLE > ‘NAM NỮ’ (source domain) AS THE WHOLE GENERAL CUSTOMERS (target domain) > *Thời trang nam nữ* ‘fashion male-female’ for ‘fashion of all kinds of customers.’

Such cultural conceptualization is not present in English. Some possible equivalents include *Ladies and gentlemen* or *Men and women*, but these expressions often have connectors like “and” with less harmony than those in Vietnamese. However, English shop signs often mention ‘gender’ as typical products or services for a certain group of target customers, that is:

- (2) HUMAN OVER NON-HUMAN > AGENT FOR CHARACTERISTICS OF THAT AGENT > GENDER (source domain) AS PRODUCTS OR SERVICES TYPICAL OF THAT GENDER (target domain) > *Boy’s world* for ‘all kinds of products or services for males.’

4.1.2 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘job’

In English shop signs, job-related words are understood as services. For example, *doctor* and *nurse* are mentioned to indicate ‘health care’ and are therefore aimed at patients and the elderly (e.g. *The eye doctors*; *Nurses on call*); *doctor* and *nurse* are also generally referred to as ‘caregivers’ in maintenance and repair (e.g. *The car doctor*), pet care (e.g. *The pet doctor*), child care (e.g. *Miss Tanya’s Nursery School*); *firefighter* is often referred to as aiding services that assist those involved in firefighting or fire accident (e.g. *Firefighter Insurance Services*; *Firefighters Credit Union*); *mechanic* is used to mean general repair services (e.g. *The Mechanic’s Shop*; *Do it yourself, auto repair shop, my mechanics place*). The conceptualization is typical in English since a word can be used to express many different related meanings. For instance, *author* and *butcher* can be actions as in *Author the book* and *Butcher the cow*.

- (3) HUMAN OVER NON-HUMAN > AGENT FOR ACTION, CATEGORY FOR QUALITY > JOB DOER (source domain) AS SERVICE (target domain) > DOCTOR/NURSE AS CARE, FIREFIGHTER AS FIRE OPERATION, MECHANIC AS MACHINE REPAIR > *The car doctor* for ‘taking care of cars,’ *Firefighters Credit Union* for ‘helping those in fire,’ *The Mechanic’s Shop* for ‘repairing machines.’

Such cultural conceptualization is not common in Vietnamese shop signs as the category of ‘job’ is rarely mentioned. The most popular one is *bác sĩ* ‘doctor’ but it is rarely recognized as a type

of service. For example, in *Phòng khám Gia Cát, Bác sĩ Lượng* ‘Gia Cat Clinic, Doctor Luong,’ *bác sĩ* is understood as the main person in charge to add descriptive information and increase credibility; also, this subject is more often expressed as the abbreviation ‘BS.’

4.1.3 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘student’ and ‘the common people’

In Vietnamese social reality, students and common people often have low incomes and therefore tend to prioritize affordable products or services. Consequently, in the daily communication of Vietnamese people, these subjects are often mentioned along low-cost products or services (e.g. *Top 12 khu chợ dành cho sinh viên giá rẻ nhất tại TP.HCM* ‘top 12 cheapest market areas for students at HCMC,’ on toplist.vn; *Điểm danh 25 quán nướng bình dân TP.HCM vừa ngon vừa rẻ đến bất ngờ* ‘check out 25 common grills in HCMC that are both delicious and surprisingly cheap,’ on vincom.com.vn). Gradually, in the Vietnamese community, *sinh viên* ‘student’ and *bình dân* ‘the common people’ are understood as ‘affordable.’ They are often mentioned on shop signs to ensure competitive price claims. The conceptualization for this can be demonstrated with the following cultural schemas:

- (4) STEREOTYPICAL OVER NONSTEREOTYPICAL, HUMAN OVER NON-HUMAN > AGENT FOR ACTION, CATEGORY FOR QUALITY > STUDENTS AND COMMON PEOPLE FOR AFFORDABLE PREFERENCES > SINH VIÊN/ BÌNH DÂN (source domain) AS AFFORDABLE PRICE (target domain) > *Com sinh viên* ‘rice for students’ for ‘inexpensive rice,’ *Quán bình dân* ‘bistro for the common’ for ‘bistro serving low-cost food.’

Such a cultural metaphor is not in the cognition of the English community. The common people are barely mentioned in shop sign language, while *students* when written are only meant to emphasize the main or relevant customers of the business' products or services. In particular, *for students* are often seen on shop signs with products intended for students and there is little indication to be understood that these products are being sold at affordable prices.

4.2 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘scale’

4.2.1 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘house’

At the systems level, English and Vietnamese both often refer to ‘house’ to express the concept of ‘large scale.’ In American cultural cognition, a house is often considered a place to access huge quantity of goods almost without prices (e.g. a *warehouse club/store* is meant to sell bulk products at low prices; or *on the house* is an idiom meaning ‘provided without paying’). Vietnamese people use *nhà* ‘house’ to refer to a person who has a large scale of knowledge, skills, and qualifications in a certain field such as *nhà văn* ‘house of literature’ (writer), *nhà thơ* ‘house of poems’ (poet), *nhà báo* ‘house of journals’ (journalist), *nhà khoa học* ‘house of science’ (scientist). In shop sign language, *house* and *nhà* are also expressed and received with the above cognition, that is, *house/nhà* is understood as a large number of a product line. For example, *Coffee House, Pie House, House of Flowers* are shops specializing in coffee, cakes, and flowers respectively; *Nhà sách* ‘house of books’ (bookstore), *Nhà thuốc* ‘house of drugs’ (drugstore). Thus, both languages share the default cognitive models for *house* and *nhà* as follows:

- (5) CONCRETE OVER ABSTRACT > CATEGORY FOR QUALITY > HOUSE/NHÀ FOR LARGE SCALE > HOUSE/NHÀ (source domain) AS HUGE QUANTITY (target domain) > *Pie House* for ‘offering all kinds of pie,’ *Nhà sách* ‘house of books’ for ‘offering all kinds of book.’

4.2.2 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘heaven’

In English shop signs, *heaven* or *paradise* is interpreted as happiness. For instance, *Message Heaven* is believed to bring relaxation; *Crystal’s Heavenly Cakes* caters for weddings; *Children’s Paradise* provides products or services for kids’ enjoyment. In Vietnamese counterparts, *thiên đường* ‘heaven/paradise’ is understood as large and abundant scales that can satisfy all tastes, like *Thiên đường ẩm thực* ‘paradise of food’ and *Thiên đường sữa* ‘paradise of milk’ respectively referring to stores that offer a variety of food and milk items, meeting all the customers’ needs. In short, both the speech communities are similar in their cognitive models of CATEGORY FOR QUALITY and CONCRETE OVER ABSTRACT, but *heaven/paradise* is projected on the perception of ‘feeling,’ casting a profile of ‘happiness;’ while *thiên đường* is perceived on the cognitive field of ‘scale,’ giving a profile of ‘vastness.’

- (6) CONCRETE OVER ABSTRACT > CATEGORY FOR QUALITY > HEAVEN/PARADISE FOR FEELING ON HEAVEN/PARADISE > HEAVEN/PARADISE (source domain) AS HAPPINESS (target domain) > *Heavenly cake* for ‘cake making you happy,’ *Children’s paradise* for ‘making children happy.’
- (7) CONCRETE OVER ABSTRACT > CATEGORY FOR QUALITY > HEAVEN/PARADISE FOR SCALE OF HEAVEN/PARADISE > HEAVEN/PARADISE (source domain) AS VASTNESS (target domain) > *Thiên đường ẩm thực* ‘paradise of food’ for ‘offering all kinds of food.’

The cultural metaphors reflect the cultural cognition of each speech community. English often relates ‘heaven’ to ‘god’ that manifests ‘happiness’ and ‘peace’ as in idioms like *in (seventh) heaven* (extremely happy), *made in heaven* (seeming to be perfect). Such conceptualization of ‘happiness’ is also familiar in Vietnamese as it seems universal. However, it is typical of Vietnamese to connect *thiên đường* with the sky and the nature, which are more often perceived from the aspect of ‘scale,’ as in *Trời đất bao la* ‘sky and land are vast.’

4.2.3 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘world’

As mentioned above, Vietnamese shop signs tend to perceive things as their scale. The concept of ‘large scale’ is also expressed through the use of *thế giới* ‘world.’ In this respect, the English counterparts share the cultural conceptualization as follows:

- (8) CONCRETE OVER ABSTRACT > CATEGORY FOR QUALITY > WORLD FOR SCALE OF WORLD > WORLD (source domain) AS VASTNESS (target domain) > *Thế giới đồ tập* ‘world of sportswear’ for ‘offering all kinds of sportswear,’ *World of toys* for ‘offering all kinds of toys.’

English shop signs, however, also relate *world* to ‘international scale’ as in *world-class* ‘the best in the world,’ *world famous* ‘well-known around the world,’ or *world cup* ‘a football tournament for different national teams.’ The conceptualization can be explained in the following cognitive models:

- (9) DOMINANT OVER LESS DOMINANT > WORLD FOR INTERNATIONAL ORIGINS > WORLD (source domain) AS INTERNATIONAL (target domain) > *World Market* for ‘market of products from around the world,’ *World of beer* for ‘beer of many origins around the world.’

4.3 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘identity’ and ‘origin’

4.3.1 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘proper name’

In Vietnamese, proper names are understood as qualities. For example, a person named *Duyên* ‘grace’ is supposedly graceful; a person named *Trí* ‘wisdom’ is expected to be smart and knowledgeable. Vietnamese proper names can denote any phenomenal thing in the objective world and thus the subjects bearing them are supposed to possess the characteristics or related properties of that phenomenal thing (Vu, 2005; Ly, 2019; Nguyen, 2022). Accordingly, a person named *Lan* ‘orchid’ is believed to bear the beautiful and pure qualities of the orchids; while the person named *Sơn* ‘mountain’ is said to have the resilient and steady qualities of the mountains. In Vietnamese shop signs, this cultural cognition is used to increase the effect of ethics, aesthetics, stature, and prestige for businesses. For instance, *Nhà thuốc Hữu Khang* ‘pharmacy of wellbeing’ evokes a feeling of ‘healthy’ and ‘safe;’ *Vải Ngọc Hương* ‘fabric of pearl fragrance’ indicates valuable and aromatic clothing. The conceptualization relating to proper names frequently included in Vietnamese shop signs can be presented as follows:

- (10) CONCRETE OVER ABSTRACT > CATEGORY FOR QUALITY > OBJECT FOR ITS CHARACTERISTICS > PROPER NAME (source domain) AS QUALITY (target domain) > BUSINESS NAME AS ITS QUALITY > *Quán Hưng Phát* ‘bistro of enormous development’ as ‘this is a prosperous business.’

English subjects do not have the above type of conceptualization because English proper names are usually limited to certain choices such as Tom, Susan, Andy, Jason, Wendy, Jack, etc. and there is little direct semantic connection in communicative practice (Searle, 1958). English proper names (or surnames) are used on shop signs primarily to describe the business owner's information or create a brand with its own signature, completely unrelated to the quality of the business or its products (e.g. *Jason Martin Group*; *Jackie's Bistro & Bar*).

4.3.2 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘famous origin’

Both English and Vietnamese shop signs often relate famous origins to the concept of ‘best quality.’ For example, *Kentucky fried chicken* and *San Francisco sourdough bread* are understood as ‘the best fried chicken’ and ‘the best sourdough bread’ respectively; similarly, *Bún bò Huế* ‘Huế beef noodles,’ *Yến sào Nha Trang* ‘Nha Trang bird nests’ are believed to be products of best quality. The mentioned places such as Kentucky, San Francisco, Huế, Nha Trang are all said to be the famous origins of the products.

- (11) STEREOTYPICAL OVER NONSTEREOTYPICAL > OBJECT’S ORIGIN FOR ITS QUALITY > FAMOUS ORIGIN (source domain) AS THE BEST (target domain) > KENTUCKY AS THE BEST OF FRIED CHICKEN, NHA TRANG AS THE BEST OF BIRD NESTS.

Such cultural cognition is built from the practical experience of the speech communities but at the same time influences their members. For instance, if a Vietnamese often sees the sign writing *Yến sào Nha Trang*, or often hears many people recommending and choosing this brand, he will gradually realize that Nha Trang is one of the best places to produce this product. The above cultural metaphor is an example of the activation, distribution, and dynamic of cultural cognition as well as cultural conceptualizations (Sharifian, 2017). Advertising strategies also draw on these characteristics to influence brand awareness by creating regular contact with customers through shop signs and social media (see Lane & Fastoso, 2016; Nguyen & Quach, 2018).

4.3.3 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘domestic origin’

English and Vietnamese shop signs often refer to domestic origins of products to increase credibility in quality, but this is perceived very differently between the two cultures. In the (American) English community, local origins are seen as clean and natural quality. Such shop signs as *The Local Butcher Shop*, *The Local Harvest*, *Hometown Coffee* are all believed to be selling fresh produce, produced naturally and completely free from chemical interference. This cultural metaphor stems from the fact that local farms in the US are said to be one of the main producers of ultra-clean, eco-friendly organic agricultural products that engage sustainably with customers, farmers, and locals (Biswas & Micallef, 2019). It follows such schemas as:

- (12) STEREOTYPICAL OVER NONSTEREOTYPICAL > OBJECT’S ORIGIN FOR ITS QUALITY > LOCAL ORIGIN (source domain) AS NATURAL QUALITY (target domain) > LOCAL/HOMETOWN AS CLEAN/ ORGANIC > *Local/Hometown Coffee* for ‘healthy coffee.’

In the cognition of the Vietnamese community, the home-made origin is considered special quality. Therefore, the shop signs like *Trà sữa nhà làm* ‘homemade milk tea’, *Bánh nhà làm* ‘homemade cake’ are understood as selling the products with special taste, safety, and thoughtfulness. This cultural metaphor originates from long-standing perceptions of family in the Vietnamese community such as *Gia đình là nơi nuôi dưỡng* ‘family is a place of nurturing’ (Nguyen, 2022), *Nhà là tổ ấm* ‘home is a warm nest’ (Vu, 2022), *Chuẩn cơm mẹ nấu* ‘standard rice cooked by mom’ (a modern Vietnamese idiom referring to delicious food or something done perfectly). The following cognitive models will help to demonstrate the conceptualization:

- (13) STEREOTYPICAL OVER NONSTEREOTYPICAL > OBJECT’S ORIGIN FOR ITS QUALITY > HOME AS A WARM NURTURING NEST > HOME-MADE ORIGIN (source domain) AS CARING QUALITY (target domain) > *Trà sữa nhà làm* ‘homemade milk tea’ for ‘special healthy milk tea.’

4.3.4 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘foreignness’

Although both English and Vietnamese use foreign elements in shop signs to show the international quality and trend, the approaches between these two language communities are different. To be more specific, Vietnamese subjects apply foreign elements on a regular, diverse, and arbitrary basis such as: (i) replacing local equivalents (e.g. *mobile* instead of *điện thoại*; *honda* instead of *xe máy* ‘motorbikes;’ *salon* instead of *tiệm làm tóc*); (ii) naming the products or services (e.g. *Túi xách Phoenix* ‘Phoenix handbags’); and (iii) indicating foreign origins (e.g. *Nhà hàng Hàn Quốc* ‘Korean restaurant’). These applications are derived from the introduction of advanced goods as well as great advances from developed countries into Vietnam. The exchange with these civilizations has formed the Vietnamese cultural cognition of foreign elements (especially English and origins from developed countries) as markers of international norms, and is therefore often considered better quality than the corresponding elements in the local. It can be said that the cultural metaphor of developed countries as high quality is common in the Vietnamese community. Accordingly, the origin of ‘export’ (to developed countries) and ‘import’ (from developed countries) is often perceived as outstanding quality.

- (14) STEREOTYPICAL OVER NONSTEREOTYPICAL > OBJECT’S ORIGIN FOR ITS QUALITY > DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (source domain) AS HIGH QUALITY (target domain) > DEVELOPED COUNTRIES/ EXPORT/ IMPORT AS HIGH QUALITY > *Thiết bị bếp Châu Âu* ‘European kitchen utensils’ for ‘high-quality kitchen utensils,’ *Trái cây nhập khẩu/xuất khẩu* ‘imported/exported fruit’ for ‘high-quality fruit.’

In contrast, foreign elements are mentioned in English shop signs mainly to indicate the identity and origin of a product or service but are rarely associated with concepts of ‘high quality.’ The evidence is that foreign elements in English shop signs are often limited to a few widely-used borrowed words such as *boutique*, *bistro*, and *café* (of French origin). Most other foreign elements are often presented in bilingual or mixed formats to express the identity of immigrant communities; for example, *Bonjour Bakery & Café* and *Hola! Restaurant* with *bonjour* and *hola* meaning ‘hello’ in French and Spanish respectively.

4.4 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘relationship’

4.4.1 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘father’ and ‘mother’

In American society as well as Western countries, the role of the father is dominant in everything from financial provisions to child upbringing; the father holds the highest power in all domestic and foreign decisions (Cienki, 2008; Ahrens, 2011). Lakoff (1995, p. 10) even refers to the cognitive model of ‘strict father’ to generalize a wide range of conceptual metaphors related to family, nation, society, and politics in many conservative and patriarchal cultures around the world, most notably in the US. In (American) English shop signs, the subject ‘son’ almost never stands alone, but is usually accompanied by the ‘father’ in the front (e.g. *Father and son Antiques*; *Father & son Men clothing*), which is often interpreted as ‘father and son jointly own the business, and the father is leading the son in the career path.’ In other words, the cultural metaphor of the father as the son’s primary guardian in English shop signs is derived from the general cultural cognition of this community as follows:

- (15) STEREOTYPICAL OVER NONSTEREOTYPICAL > Cultural schema of STRICT FATHER > FATHER (source domain) AS SON’S GUARDIAN (target domain) > *Father and son* for ‘father leading the son.’

In the Vietnamese community, the husband or father is seen as the pillar, the fulcrum, the roof (Vu, 2022), meaning that the father also stands at the center of the family with most of the power and responsibility as in Western countries. However, when it comes to raising children, it is the wife or mother who plays a decisive role (Do, 2022). The cultural cognition of the special relationship between mother and children in the Vietnamese community is evident through familiar proverbs such as *Con hư tại mẹ* ‘children are spoiled due to mom,’ *Con dại cái mang* ‘when children are wrong, mom takes charge.’ In other words, in the Vietnamese community, mothers are considered the main guardians of their children. This cultural metaphor reflects the deeply ingrained practice of The Mother worship in the Vietnamese community “as a special national religion” (Tran, 1997, p. 288). According to Do (2022), the reasons why the ‘female’ factor is more acknowledged in Vietnamese cultural cognition compared to the ‘male’ factor in Western countries include: (i) the matriarchy that started in the East before gradually transitioning to patriarchy; (ii) characteristics of Vietnamese professions such as agriculture, knitting, and weaving that need the ingenuity of women; (iii) the assignment of ‘male’ for foreign affairs and ‘female’ for domestic ones; (iv) the Vietnamese prosperous mindset, emphasizing procreation, nurturing and education that are associated with the mother or wife’s responsibilities; (v) stronger balance between patriarchal and matriarchy in the Vietnamese community. In Vietnamese shop signs, the above cultural metaphor is manifested with the ‘mother’ often accompanying and preceding the ‘baby’, as in *Siêu thị mẹ và bé* ‘supermarket of mom and baby,’ and *Thời trang mẹ và bé* ‘fashion for mother and baby.’ The conceptualization can be described as follows:

- (16) STEREOTYPICAL OVER NONSTEREOTYPICAL > Cultural schema of THE MOTHER > MOTHER (source domain) AS CHILDREN'S GUARDIAN (target domain) > *Mom and baby* for 'mom taking care of baby.'

4.4.2 Cultural metaphors relating to 'friend'

In English shop signs, the person who is always by his side is considered a friend, such as *sidekick*, *wingman*, and *partner* (e.g. *Sidekicks Bar & Grill*; *Wingman Liquor & Deli*; *Your Financial Partner*). Generally, the concept of 'friend' in English is perceived on the basis of spatial position like *side*, *wing*, and *part*. According to Kövecses (1995), it is on the cognitive field of 'distance' that the 'closeness' of friendship or relationship is shaped in the (American) cultural cognition (e.g. *My closest friend* means 'my best/dearest friend'). In Vietnamese, people of the same unit and ideals are considered friends, such as *anh em/huynh đệ* 'brothers' referring to 'children of one family,' or *đồng đội/chiến hữu* 'comrades' referring to 'people from the same team and fighting together' (e.g. *Quán nhậu Anh em* 'brothers liquor;' *Huynh đệ quán* 'brothers bistro;' *Cà phê đồng đội* 'comrades coffee;' *Ám thực chiến hữu* 'comrades cuisine'). The concept of 'friend' in Vietnamese is thus constructed on the basis of 'shared characteristics.' The above difference between English and Vietnamese stems from the individualistic and independent nature of Western cultures (Anglo cultures), as opposed to the centralized and communal nature of Eastern cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 2014), especially Vietnamese community that is typical of conceptualizations relating to family traditions and long history of national defense.

- (17) SPECIFIC OVER GENERIC, CONCRETE OVER ABSTRACT > DISTANCE/CLOSENESS FOR THE DEGREE OF RELATIONSHIP > THE ONE BY SIDE (source domain) AS FRIEND (target domain) > *sidekick*, *wingman*, *partner* as 'friend.'
- (18) GENERIC OVER SPECIFIC, WHOLE OVER PART > SHARED GROUP/IDEAL FOR THE DEGREE OF RELATIONSHIP > THE ONE WITH SHARED GROUP/IDEALS (source domain) AS FRIEND (target domain) > *anh em*, *huynh đệ*, *đồng đội*, *chiến hữu* as 'friend.'

4.4.3 Cultural metaphors relating to 'love'

In English, heart and sweetness are perceived as love or lover. For example, *My heart will go on* is interpreted as 'my love will go on;' *sweetie*, *sweetheart*, and *honey* are often used to refer to those who are loved so much like children, lovers, or dear friends. This cultural metaphor is typical in many languages, belonging to the "embodiment strand" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999; Johnson, 1987) with parts of the body as source domains in the mapping, such as THE HEART IS THE SEAT OF EMOTIONS. In English shop signs, *heart* and *sweetness* are also frequently used in relation to the concept of 'love' to connect with customers. The conceptualization can be explained as follows:

- (19) CONCRETE OVER ABSTRACT > HEART AS SEAT OF EMOTIONS > HEART/SWEETNESS (source domain) AS LOVE/LOVER (target domain) > *Whole Heart Provisions* for 'providing with love,' *Sweetie's Cafe* for 'cafe for lover.'

Unlike English, Vietnamese perceived the belly/gut/abdomen/intestine/liver/heart/lung as the center of things (e.g. *Lòng bàn tay* 'gut of hands' for 'palm;' *Ruột xe* 'intestine of vehicle' for 'vehicle engine') (Nong, 2016), of personality (e.g. *Dạ ngọc gan vàng* 'gem abdomen-yellow liver' for 'loyal;' *Gan chai phôi đá* 'hard liver-stone lung' for 'strong-willed') (Nguyen, 2016); of emotions, willpower, aspirations (e.g. *Ruột để ngoài da* 'intestine left outside skin' for

‘straightforward;’ *Sáng dạ* ‘bright gut’ for ‘smart;’ *Khao khát trong tim* ‘longing in the heart’ for ‘ambitious’) (Dinh & Le Thi, 2016; Tran, 2018). However, the above belly-related subjects have less aesthetic effects when applied in the language of shop signs, especially when it comes to romantic relationship. Therefore, Vietnamese shop signs usually refers to ‘love’ directly such as *Hoa yêu thương* ‘Loving flowers,’ *Siêu thị bé yêu* ‘supermarket of loved baby,’ *Thiên đường vật yêu* ‘paradise of loved pet.’

4.5 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘quality’

4.5.1 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘green’ and ‘organic’

At the systems level, English and Vietnamese are the same in that ‘green’ and ‘organic’ are understood as fresh, clean, and environmentally friendly (e.g. *green energy* as a source of energy that does not pollute the environment; *organic food* as naturally produced food with no chemicals). This cultural cognition is becoming a common thinking of many cultures around the world, in which ‘green’ and ‘organic’ are mapped on the cognitive field of ‘plant’ into characteristic properties such as ‘fresh,’ ‘clean,’ and ‘natural.’ In English and Vietnamese shop signs, *green-xanh* and *organic-hữu cơ* are used with similar conceptualizations as follows:

- (20) SPECIFIC OVER GENERIC > QUALITY FOR CATEGORY > GREEN/ORGANIC FOR PLANT > GREEN/ORGANIC (source domain) AS FRESH/CLEAN/ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY (target domain) > *Green Bar & Kitchen, Organic Harvest, Bách hóa xanh* ‘green groceries,’ *Rau hữu cơ* ‘organic vegetables’ for ‘fresh, clean, natural, and environmentally friendly products or services.’

4.5.2 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘affordable’

Price is always one of the first aspects that customers care about when accessing products or services of a business. Different communities have different conceptualizations of ‘price’ expressed in shop sign language. For example, as mentioned above, Vietnamese subjects are typical of STUDENT/THE COMMON PEOPLE AS AFFORDABLE PREFERENCES. In English shop signs, the concept of ‘affordable’ is often associated with dollar. This conceptualization originated from the idea of many American stores offering items with no more than one dollar in the 1950s. Subsequently, a series of similar stores were established and became popular in American society, especially among low-income customers (Marchesi et al., 2023). These stores often use the word *dollar* in their brand names to emphasize the strategic pricing. The most famous chain stores include *Dollar General, Dollar Tree, Family Dollar* specializing in providing cheap products. Later, most stores selling affordable products have a similar use of the word *dollar*, such as *Dollar Store, Dollar Wrap, Dollar Plus, Dollar Magic, Dollar Power, Dollarama*. They are all called “dollar stores” as convenience stores with many products of this trend. In other words, dollar is understood to be affordable as a cultural metaphor featured in (American) English shop signs.

- (21) CONCRETE OVER ABSTRACT > THING PERCEIVED FOR THE PERCEPTION > DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR STORE > DOLLAR (source domain) AS AFFORDABLE PRICE (target domain) > *Dollar Store* for ‘store offering affordable products.’

4.5.3 Cultural metaphors relating to ‘time’

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) generalize the relationship between time and its value using cognitive models such as TIME IS MONEY, TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY. Accordingly, time is also related to quality. It is common knowledge that the longer a business exists in the market, the more likely it is to be trusted and favored. Therefore, English shop signs often mention the

time of the business establishment along with its products, services, and brand to affirm its reputation for quality in the market. The further back the establishment year of the business, the more reliable the quality of the product or service.

- (22) CONCRETE OVER ABSTRACT > THING PERCEIVED FOR THE PERCEPTION > TIME FOR QUALITY > LONG TIME OF EXISTENCE (source domain) AS HIGH QUALITY (target domain) > *Tommy Dinic's roast pork and beef, since 1954* for 'reliable pork and beef,' *Best little town in Florida EST. 1951* for 'reputable town.'

The perception of establishment time as a marker of the quality and reliability of the business is not typical in Vietnamese shop signs. However, some have recently begun to embrace and apply this cultural conceptualization as a consequence of intercultural and interlingual communication with the English communities over a long period, as in *Bún bò mẹ Mui từ 1935* 'mother Mui's Beef noodle soup since 1935.'

5. Conclusion

By the method of metadiscourse analysis focusing on lexical items and structures with diverse meanings in the collected corpus, the study uncovered some of the cultural conceptualizations that underlie the cultural metaphors featured in (American) English and Vietnamese shop signs. Cultural metaphors are also products of cultural cognition, reflecting many significant similarities and differences in the way knowledge is selected, shared, and received among members of each speech community, as demonstrated by the cognitive models derived from traditional customs, history, psychology, natural and social features in that speech community.

The results show that the two speech communities are quite similar in the cultural metaphors of HOUSE/WORLD AS HUGE QUANTITY, FAMOUS ORIGIN AS BEST QUALITY, GREEN/ORGANIC AS CLEAN AND NATURAL. Some typical cultural metaphors in English shop signs include GENDER AS PRODUCTS OR SERVICES TYPICAL OF THAT GENDER, JOB DOER AS SERVICE, LOCAL/HOMETOWN AS CLEAN AND NATURAL, HEART/SWEETNESS AS LOVE, LONG TIME OF EXISTENCE AS HIGH QUALITY. Vietnamese shop signs are characterized by such cultural metaphors as 'MALE-FEMALE' AS THE WHOLE GENERAL CUSTOMERS, BUSINESS' PROPER NAME AS ITS QUALITY, HOME-MADE ORIGIN AS CARING QUALITY. Some conceptualization variations are also found in the following cultural metaphors: HEAVEN/PARADISE AS HAPPINESS in English but AS VASTNESS in Vietnamese; WORLD AS INTERNATIONAL ORIGINS in English but AS VASTNESS in Vietnamese; FOREIGNNESS AS INTERNATIONAL ORIGINS in English but AS HIGH QUALITY in Vietnamese; THE FATHER AS SON'S GUARDIAN in English while THE MOTHER AS CHILDREN'S GUARDIAN in Vietnamese; THE ONE BY SIDE AS FRIEND in English while THE ONE WITH SHARED GROUP/IDEAL AS FRIEND in Vietnamese; DOLLAR AS AFFORDABLE PRICE in English while STUDENT/THE COMMON PEOPLE AS AFFORDABLE PRICE in Vietnamese.

The cultural metaphors of each speech community are not rigid rules that its members are supposed to follow or receive similarly in the course of linguistic and social interaction, but a system of shared knowledge for the members to refer to, select, approach, explain, learn, inherit, apply, and develop. In fact, each member of a speech community has different levels of perceiving, sharing, manipulating, and contributing to the system, depending on his or her psychophysiological development and degrees of linguistic and social interaction. Therefore, a

cultural metaphor might be present in one's cognition but absent or differently perceived in another's. Given that, the cultural metaphors that have been discussed in this study are highly potential and thus significantly worth being taken into account when it comes to exploring cultural cognition of the speech communities.

The study contributes specific theoretical background and its practical applications to the language use in (American) English and Vietnamese shop signs from the perspective of cultural cognition as a foundation for analyzing some encoding phenomena with cultural interaction from the level of conceptualization and intercultural pragmatics. Subsequently, further cultural linguistics studies can focus on the following aspects: (i) Vietnamese shop signs in a geographical area reflect indigenous or foreign cultural conceptualizations; (ii) English shop signs in a geographical area of Vietnamese communities reflect Vietnamese or foreign cultural conceptualizations; (iii) how the phenomena of mixed cultural conceptualizations are manifested in the way of coding; (iv) approaches of shop sign translation between English and Vietnamese should be considered from the perspective of indigenous or international conceptualization, or a third space (with cultural mixing). The above research proposals need to be based on not only qualitative data to indicate existing phenomena but also quantitative data to prove the level of cultural contact, thereby having a scientific base to assess the level of cultural retention and integration of a speech community.

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ẤN DỤ VĂN HÓA TRONG BIÊN HIỆU TIẾNG ANH MỸ VÀ TIẾNG VIỆT

Tóm tắt: Biên hiệu đóng vai trò quan trọng trong thời đại thương mại và du lịch toàn cầu. Các nghiên cứu trước đây đã đưa ra kết luận chung về các đặc điểm, biểu hiện và chức năng của ngôn ngữ biên hiệu. Nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích khám phá các ý niệm văn hóa, ngữ dụng và xã hội được mã hóa trong ngôn ngữ biên hiệu thông qua các ấn dụ văn hóa. Dữ liệu quan sát bao gồm 1,748 biên hiệu tiếng Anh Mỹ và 1,585 biên hiệu tiếng Việt. Các ý niệm văn hóa tiềm tàng trong các biểu thức ngôn ngữ được phát hiện bằng phương pháp phân tích siêu diễn ngôn và sau đó được khái quát hóa dưới dạng các mô hình tri nhận và mô hình hoán dụ làm nền tảng cho sự hiểu biết về các ấn dụ văn hóa. Kết quả cho thấy sự khác biệt đáng kể giữa hai cộng đồng ngôn ngữ trong các ấn dụ văn hóa liên quan đến khách hàng, quy mô kinh doanh, bản sắc kinh doanh, nguồn gốc sản phẩm, mối quan hệ và chất lượng. Nghiên cứu đóng góp những hiểu biết lý thuyết và thực tiễn cụ thể về biên hiệu tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt từ góc độ tri nhận văn hóa, từ đó cung cấp cơ sở để phân tích các hiện tượng mã hóa ở cấp độ tiếp xúc ý niệm hóa văn hóa và ngữ dụng liên văn hóa.

Từ khóa: Tri nhận văn hóa, ý niệm hóa văn hóa, ấn dụ văn hóa, đối chiếu Anh-Việt, biên hiệu