

A STUDY ON *COUNTRY IS A UNITY*

IN SOME VIETNAMESE POEMS¹

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INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

Nowadays, the demands for the proficiency of using a language is created for its power and usefulness in many fields. Language is regarded as a useful means for humans to communicate with one another. Researching a language must focus on linguistic competence, Vietnamese are not outside that goal. It forces the author to choose the study “primary Vietnamese concept of country through some Vietnamese poems” because of the reasons below.

Each word in Vietnamese are usually defined in the dictionary but the nature of the word is that it is always linked to the desires and feelings of users. In each word, there is always symbol, image and concept. Therefore, to aid in learning, teaching and translating, we will use the concept. Normally, each word has some meanings, one is concrete concept and another is abstract one(s).

Country is a word that has not only physical meaning but also abstract meaning. Especially, country is a concept which is holy as well as closely, both simple and meaningful. Therefore, this is researched and used in education, teaching and translation.

2. Purposes of the study

The purposes of study are as follows:

- To provide reader, English learners with fundamental understanding about cognitive linguistic, concept, taxonomies, partonomies and meanings of some words.
- To study the meanings of country in Vietnamese. To understanding the cultures, customs language of Vietnamese about country in their concepts.

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- To offer some techniques in teaching and translation and suggested exercises in learning country concepts.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. Cognitive linguistic

Cognitive linguistics (CL) refers to the branch of linguistics that interprets language in terms of the concepts, sometimes universal, sometimes specific to a particular tongue, which underlie its forms. It is thus closely associated with semantics but is distinct from psycholinguistics, which draws upon empirical findings from cognitive psychology in order to explain the mental processes that underlie the acquisition, storage, production and understanding of speech and writing.

“Cognitive linguistics is characterized by adherence to three central *Positions*. *First*, it denies that there is an autonomous linguistic faculty in the *mind*; *second*, it understands grammar in terms of conceptualization; and *third*, it claims that knowledge of language arises out of language use” (V.Evans,2006).

Cognitive linguists deny that the mind has any module for language- acquisition that is unique and autonomous. This stands in contrast to the stance adopted in the field of generative grammar. Although cognitive linguists do not necessarily deny that part of the human linguistic ability is innate, they deny that it is *separate* from the rest of cognition. They thus reject a body of opinion in cognitive science suggesting that there is evidence for the modularity of language. They argue that knowledge of linguistic phenomena - i.e... phonemes, morphemes, and syntax - are essentially conceptual in nature. However, they assert that the storage and retrieval of linguistic data is not significantly different from the storage and retrieval of other knowledge, and that use of language in understanding employs similar cognitive abilities to those used in other non-linguistic tasks.

Departing from the tradition of truth-conditional semantics, cognitive linguists view meaning in terms of conceptualization. Instead of viewing, meaning in terms of model of the world, they view it in terms of mental spaces.

2. Concept in cognitive linguistic

2.1. *The notion of concept*

In cognitive linguistics, concept is “organized by the field feature and include a sensual image, informational content and interpretative field. Sensual image in the structure of a concept is formed by perceptual cognitive features. These features arise in the native speakers’ minds reflecting the environment through the organs of senses. Figurative features form a metaphorical interpretation of objects and phenomena (V. Evans, 2009).

According to V. Evans (2009) “concepts are intermediaries between the words and extra linguistic reality. Only those phenomena of the reality can become a concept, that are relevant to and valuable for a particular culture, which has a large number of linguistic units to commit themselves in that culture, which are the subject for proverbs and sayings, poetry and prose.”

Among the definitions of concepts, J. Spelanov - a Russian scientist stated that “concepts are just phrases, fragments of conversation<...>, but they are subtle phrases that force our minds create such content, as if it has been familiar for us for a long time”. Concept can be understood as bunch of culture in the consciousness of people; it is something in the form of which the culture enters the mental world. And, moreover, people through the concept enter the culture and affect it. Concepts are not only contemplated, they are experienced. They are the subject of emotions, likes and dislikes, and sometimes collisions”. In conclusion, there have a lot of varied concepts. However, we understand that concept is an abstract definition that related to cultures, customs or experiences that they are insulated in linguistics or cognitive languages.

2.2. Some structures of concept

According to V. Evans, ‘the concepts internally are organized by tin field feature and include a sensual imagine informational content and interpretative field. Sensual imagine in the structure of a concept is formed by a perceptual cognitive features. These features arise in the native speakers’ minds reflecting the environment through the organs of senses. Figurative features form a metaphorical interpretation of objects and phenomena. The structure of the concept is formed by cognitive classifiers and are merged with cognitive features which vary in the degree of brightness in the minds (V. Evans, 2009).

The informational content of the concept consists of a minimum amount of cognitive features that determine the most important and distinguishing features of an object or phenomenon. The interpretative field includes cognitive features, which interpret the informational content of the concept. A distinctive feature of the interpretive field is the presence of cognitive symptoms conflicting with one another. The structure of a concept can be described only when its content is defined and described, that is, the cognitive features of the concept are

revealed.

2.3. Categories

We can only make sense of the world of our experienced and communicate our thoughts by means of what philosophers and linguists call categories. A category is the conceptualisation of a collection of similar experiences that are meaningful and relevant to us, i.e. categories are formed for things that “matter” in a community. Categories are conceptual in nature, and many, but by no means all, of our conceptual categories are laid down in language as linguistic categories. Let us think of an everyday situation that may give rise to a meaningful category for which we do not have a linguistic category.

2.4. Taxonomies

Categories are included in hierarchies of categories. They are normally included as members of a higher category and their turn subsume members of a lower category. Such conceptual hierarchies are known as taxonomies.

The types of category that come to our mind most readily in our daily interaction with the world belong to the middle, or basic level. Categories at the basic level such as ‘car’, ‘train’ and ‘plane’ are conceptually much more salient than either their superordinate category ‘means of transport’ or any of their subordinate categories. As a result, terms which denote basic – level categories, i.e. basic – level terms, have special properties: they are simple in form, are used frequently, are learned early by young children, and evoke rich images.

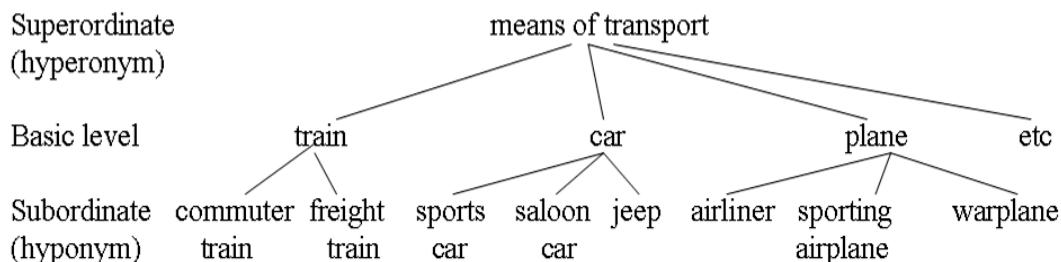


Table 1: Taxonomies of the category “means of transport” (Radden: 8)

CONCEPT *COUNTRY* IS A UNITY IN SOME VIETNAMESE POEMS

Unity is a situation in which people have united because they share the same purpose. It consists of area/land and its name, people and other creature, things, events. And the taxonomy of the category “country” can be illustrated as in Table 3:

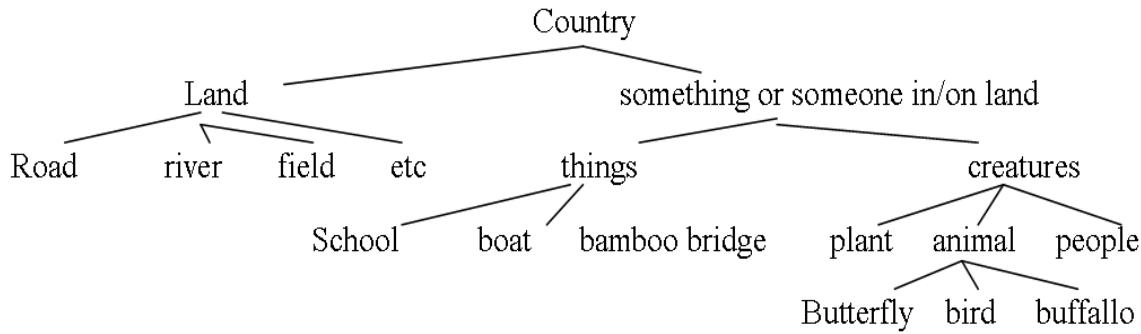


Table 3: Taxonomy of the category “country”

In the unity, people are one of the most important elements. They unite themselves and all the things in/on the land, the area in a unity.

1. Country is land

In a basic way, country is as land as a physical meaning. Any country has specific land filled with river, mountain, field, road, etc. Without feelings, anyone understand what land is. They can define for it by their knowledge which they got through television, newspaper, book, people’s telling although they have never been this land before. At that time, land only has a physical meaning. However, the land is inherent in their place where they were born, it is not simply has physical meaning. Land became more abstract because it connect with people feelings as well as their experiences. This is land where they were born, they live, study and work. People has feelings with land as well as land’s factor.

In any lands, there are many roads. They may be not familiar to us which we have not ever gone through once. We know them when we are telled again by someone, when we watch or listen through media. At that time, road is only road. It is reflected with concrete meaning which can be defined in dictionary simply without any feelings of people. However, there are also roads is not unfamiliar with people. Roads where come and go school freely every morning

and become more bustling with lively discussion about children's school and class. The road seem to be lifeless but it goes down in each people's heart with so many memories which anyone kept in their hearts and minds. From the emotions about the road, people love their country as well as their road.

(1) Đất là nơi anh đến trường (Land is road which I go to school)

(Homeland – Nguyen Khoa Diem)

Not just road, but field become indespensable whenever we talk about country, about land. To everyone, especially people have been in countryside, field play a important part. Everybody understand what field is, but it just is in our mind when it associate with our feelings. With the field which we do not see before, we still define what it is, but it just a mechanical and physical meaning without emotions. In contrast, the field is in where we live, we work in. We usually named it "country field". It connect with the soul of people, especially farmer. The field goes with compiled memories of childhood smoothly. This is flying the kite, playing each other each afternoon or humming a song pleasurabley.

(2) Hòa bình tôi trở về đây/ Vói mái trường xưa, *bãi mía, luống cày*.

(When country is peaceful, I return here/ with old school, *cane field, rice field*)

(Country – Giang Nam)

(3) Những người dân nào đã góp tên Ông Đốc, Ông Trang, Bà Đen, Bà Điểm/ Và ở đâu trên khắp *ruộng đồng* gò *bãi*.

(Someone named some places Ông Đốc, Ông Trang, Bà Đen, Bà Điểm/ And for anywhere *any field*, any mound, any plain)

(Homeland – Nguyen Khoa Diem)

All these examples have to do with the image-schema of field. Field is inherent in land. It is also country image.

2. Country is as something or someone in/on land

Country is not only land but also things or creatures on it. If it is lack of these things, the concept of country can not take shape.

(4) Thuở còn thơ ngày hai buổi đến trường / Yêu quê hương qua từng trang sách nhỏ.

(I went to *school* two spells of learning a day/ I love my country through lessons in *my book*.)

(Country – Giang Nam)

(11) Hoà bình tôi trở về đây/ Với mai trường xưa, bã mía, luống cày.

(When country is peaceful, I return here/ with *old school*, cane field, rice field.)

(Country – Giang Nam)

Schools are some kind of images of country. It locates on a land which has houses or rooms. In school, there are stone benches, entrance, trees, especially flamboyant or Malabar almond tree. However, if school is shortage of classes, teachers, students, school is not school. When it fulled with those things, it makes the concept of school. At that time, school are useful lessons through course books between teacher and students, funny talk with friends, interesting games in school yard, etc.

Country is also things or creates in it. It is our ancester's bone and blood, our sweat, our effort. Our forefather had the marit of founding and sacrificed their life to safeguard our country for present – day country.

Nay yêu quê hương vì trong từng năm đất/ Có một phần xương thịt của em tôi.

(Today I love country because in land/ have *my lover's sacrificing*)

(Country – Giang Nam)

Emơi em Đất Nước là máu xương của mình.

(Country is *our bone and blood*)

(Homeland – Nguyen Khoa Diem)

Now, country is not countable noun, it becomes uncountable noun which associate with creatures. It is plant, animal and people. All these things makes memories, feeling of each persons. This feelings is about simple life as well as the country love which take shape in everyone's mind day by day unintentionally.

3. Country is as some events dealt with people in/on the land

Country is connected with people's experience and imagined as “*chim hót trên cao/ Nhữnng ngày trốn học/ Đuổi bướm cùu ao/ Mẹ bắt được/ Chưa đánh roi nào đã khóc/ Có cô bé nhà bên/ Nhìn tôi cười khúc khích...*” (bird twitter/ play truant/ catch butterfly/ my mother catch me/ punish/ cry/ laugh giggling) (Giang Nam). And the experience itself makes people closer to their country.

4. Country is as a unity

Country has land, somethings or someone and some events dealt with people in/on land. They connect with each other closely by people's feeling. It seems to have invisible wire to link them to create a unity.

*Xưa yêu quê hương vì có chim, có bướm/ Có nhữnng ngày trốn học bị đòn, roi
Nay yêu quê hương vì trong từng nắm đất/ Có một phần xương thịt của em tôi.*

(In the past, I *love country* because of *bird, butterfly/ because of the day of playing truant to be punish*

Today I *love country* because in land/ have *my lover's sacrificing*)

CONCLUSION

1. A summary of the study

From the analysis above, we have a deep knowledge of Vietnamese languages about concept of country. The study gives us a full look of country and how Vietnamese people think of country.

Concept of country is taken shape in people's mind since their childhood. When they were children, they can not understand what country is. But concept of country is taken shape in

their perception from smallest things. They are physical things such as land, field, school, etc to daily activities as tending buffalo, catching butterfly, playing truant and so on. All connect closely with a place or in other word, it is country. Frequency of people's image appears in poems is biggest. It is easy to understand because other related to people's experience. Animals appear five times with bird, butterfly and buffalo. Plant have twice as much as school. Especially, "bone and blood" only appears once but it has important effect.

With the concept of country, we can use and motivate the learners' interests. Anyway, we also can use as objects of lessons, teach and learn languages, especially the second language i.e. teach vocabulary, cognitive grammar and language skills (writing, listening, reading, speaking). Through using physical meaning as well as abstract meanings, we can use it to educate students, children, to focus on fostering emotional revolution, inspire and promote patriotism.

Beside that, it can be used in translation as well as in talking with foreign people about country and feelings of Vietnamese people about their country.

2. Implications for teaching English

- Using image of country in teaching and learning languages

Using image of country is an effective way for teachers to teach vocabulary concept of country consisting of adjective, verb and nouns. Because when we think of country, we will think about its features. It is time we need nouns. So the features of a country can be described by roads, rivers, land, etc.

- Using pictures of country as object of teaching and learning

Concept of country can bring students interesting titles and motivate students' learning. When teachers want their students to discover country, it will be a good topic for writing, listening, speaking and reading.

Additionally, concept of country can be used as an object to teach four English skills for students. In fact, we can borrow images of country to teach from elementary to advanced level.

- Discussion about country in integrated education

Concept of country teaches us not only the knowledge but also behavior, morality of a person. It also teaches us how to love everything around us as well as country love. For example,

when we teach about what country's love, we can use concept of country to explain the reason why we love country and what we need to do to express the country's love.

3. Limitations and suggestions for further research

It is common that concept are the complicated language phenomenon. Therefore researching concepts in common and country concept in particular is not easy task. The truth is that this study just deal with aspects of country through two poems in Vietnamese. Thus the author would like to give some suggestions for further researcher as follow:

- A contrastive analysis of English and Vietnamese concept of country.
- A study on the Grammar Structure of country concept in English and Vietnamese.

To sum up, because of the limitation of time, mistakes are unavoidable. Thus, the author would be very delighted to receive all your marks, comments as well as advice improve this study.

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