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# Conceptual Season Metaphors in English and Vietnamese Songs: Season as Concrete Entity

Sy Thi Thom 

*Military College of Special Forces*

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## Abstract

*The paper aims at identifying conceptual metaphors of SEASON through their metaphorical expressions in English and Vietnamese song lyrics from a cognitive perspective based on the theory of conceptual metaphors initiated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The data collected from 181 English and Vietnamese songs (90 and 91 songs respectively) from the 20th century to the present consist of 288 metaphorical expressions. The study shows the similarities and differences of conceptual metaphors of season in English and Vietnamese songs. The results reveal that there are 6 conceptual metaphors of season when season is regarded as concrete entity in English and Vietnamese.*

**Keywords:** metaphorical expression, conceptual metaphor, domain, mapping, concrete entity

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**Correspondence author:** Sy Thi Thom

**Email:** [thomtsqdc@gmail.com](mailto:thomtsqdc@gmail.com)

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## 1. Introduction

The development of cognitive linguistics in general and cognitive semantics in particular during the past few decades has laid the groundwork for conceptual metaphor's recent resurgence. As a result, numerous research have been carried out globally, particularly in Vietnam, to investigate conceptual metaphors concentrating on both abstract and physical notions surrounding our human worldwide. Especially, significant attention has been paid to abstract concepts as target domains in investigating conceptual metaphors, which can be easily understood because conceptual metaphor is a process of conceptualizing a more abstract domain in terms of more concrete domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

The different abstract ideas that have been looked at include life, emotion, grief, and so on. A similar amount of research has also been done on time, an abstract term, by both foreign and Vietnamese authors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010; Shinohara & Pardeshi, 2011; Nguyen, 2007; Nguyen, 2014). Season has, however, received little attention thus far despite being a time-related notion. Therefore, this study is being undertaken to identify conceptual metaphors of season in English and Vietnamese in terms of season being viewed as concrete entity in order to enrich the body of literature of conceptual metaphor.

## 2. Definition of the Conceptual Metaphor

In terms of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), metaphor in essence is “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p.5). The ‘thing’ that is to be understood is often an abstract concept which is referred to in CMT as the target domain (TD); the other concrete ‘thing’ which is used to understand the abstract concept is referred to as the source domain (SD); and according to Kövecses (2010) this phenomenon of conceptualizing one domain in terms of another is called conceptual metaphor. Accordingly, the term metaphor is used in this study in the sense of the term conceptual metaphor (in which one conceptual domain is

understood on terms of another conceptual domain). This understanding is achieved by seeing a set of systematic correspondences, or mappings, between the two domains.

**Data Collection:** The data collected comes from 181 English and Vietnamese song lyrics (90 and 91 respectively) from the 20th century to present. The samples chosen for the examination of conceptual metaphors of season are taken from song lyrics, where a plenty of conceptual metaphors related to season is anticipated. There are various sources, including records found on the Internet, records found on CDs and DVDs, and publishing printings.

### 3. Analytical Framework

Within the scope of study, the findings will find out the source domains used to map on SEASON in terms of concrete domains. The analytical framework of this study can be visualized in the Figure below:

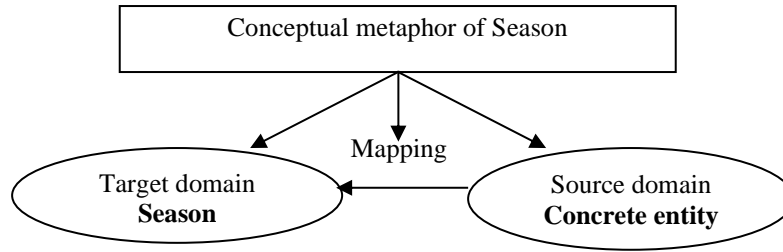


Figure 1. Analytical framework of conceptual metaphor of season

### 4. Findings and discussion

That SEASON is conceptualized as a concrete entity is found to be common in both languages with relatively high quantities, with 151 in English and 137 expressions in Vietnamese. It means that the former data possesses a higher number of expressions than that of the latter. In this case, SEASON, an abstract thing in reality, is mapped through the image of a concrete object that human beings easily perceived by virtue of physical experiences. The concrete entities found to map onto SEASON are grouped into domains as summarized in the table below:

Table 1. Domains of concrete entities used for SEASON in English and Vietnamese

Domains of concrete entity		English		Vietnamese	
		Number of expressions	Percentage (%)	Number of expressions	Percentage (%)
1	Corporeal object	58	38.4	60	43.8
2	Colored object	19	12.6	53	38.7
3	Olfactory object	3	2.0	15	10.9
4	Tasty object	10	6.6	6	4.4
5	Existence	44	29.1	3	2.2
6	Possessed entity	17	11.3	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>151</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.1. Corporeal Object

The investigation into the two data sets uncovers that a big number of entities are used to perceive the SEASON entity. Nonetheless, we have no idea exactly what they are. In other words, these entities are just recognized as *corporeal objects*. In the case, English and Vietnamese hold comparatively similar numbers of expressions: 58 and 60 respectively. This can be accompanied by some linguistic instantiations as follows:

- (1) *Let me see what spring's like.* (Bart, *Fly Me to the Moon*)
- (2) *The other side of summer.* (Macmanus, *The other side of summer*)
- (3) *Mùa xuân trên vành môi tươi thắm.* (Nguyễn Ngọc Thiện, *Ta đã thấy mùa xuân*)  
'Spring is on the ruddy lip rim'
- (4) *Em đứng lên mùa Xuân vừa mở.* (Trịnh Công Sơn, *Gọi tên bốn mùa*)  
'By the time I stood up, spring had been open'

According to CALD, the verb *see* in (1) means “to be conscious of what is around you by using your eyes”. It can be understood that the thing which is seen must be concrete. Similarly, noun *other side* in (2) used to describe a sided object, which evokes the image employed to portray SEASON. Likewise, in Vietnamese, the preposition *trên* ‘on’ combining with the adverb of place *vành môi* “lip” in (3) reveals that *mùa xuân* ‘spring’ can be seen via human’s eyes (called visual organ). It is apparent that the things people are able to perceive by at least one of their five sensory organs are concrete. In addition, the expression *mùa xuân vừa mở* ‘spring had been open’ in (4) leads to this metaphorical manifestation of *spring*. According to the Vietnamese Dictionary (Hoang, 2003), the adjective *mở* ‘open’ is used to describe bounded objects. These metaphorical expressions give rise to the metaphor SEASON IS A CORPOREAL OBJECT.

#### 4.2. Colored Object

In terms of concrete entity, the source domain mapping onto this season is also found as the manifestations of colored objects in both corpora. However, the conceptual metaphor SEASON IS A COLORED OBJECT in Vietnamese has expressions nearly three times as many as those in English, with 53 and 19 cases respectively. This manifestation of SEASON can be clarified with the expressions below:

- (5) *Waiting for the color of spring.* (Baez, April 5<sup>th</sup>)
- (6) *Danced with her in kitchens through the greenest summer.* (Oberst, a perfect sonnet by bright eyes)
- (7) *Winter is blue.* (Bunyan, Winter is blue)
- (8) *Xuân còn thắm tươi; Anh còn mong chờ.* (Phạm Duy, Xuân ca)  
‘Spring is still ruddy, I still look forward to seeing you.’
- (9) *Xuân xanh lơ, hắt hiu trong trời nắng mưa* (Phạm Duy, Xuân ca)  
‘Spring is blue, and gloomy in the sun and rain.’
- (10) *Hạ trắng lang thang miền man tình buồn.* (Nguyễn Bá Khiêm, Chiều hạ vàng)  
‘White summer wanders with forever sad love.’
- (11) *Mùa thu vàng tới là mùa lá vàng rơi.* (Cung Tiến, Thu vàng)  
‘Golden autumn comes referring to the season of golden leaves falling.’

Obviously, the wording in instance (5), with the phrase *the color of spring*, proves that spring is a concrete object having color. In addition, the lexemes of the adjectives related to colors (which are recognized via the sight (vision) of human beings), for example, *green*, *blue*, *thắm tươi* ‘ruddy’, and *xanh lơ* ‘blue’, *trắng* ‘white’, *vàng* ‘golden’ in (9 to 11) are deployed to depict the entity SEASON. As can be seen in the sentences above, people imagine *summer* as an object with the color of green in (6), and *xuân* ‘spring’ as ruddy one in (8). According to Amouzadeh et al, *green* is connected to other concepts such as grass, trees, or bushes (2012, p.124). It is likely that the weather pattern in two seasons: spring and summer with warmth and rain condition is convenient for plant grow properly, making the sprouts appear and their leaves greener. As a result, people associate this color with the two seasons. In contrast, *winter* is considered as a *blue object* in (7), as well as *Xuân* ‘spring’ in (9) is blue. Apparently, the weather is often very cold in winter, which makes people have negative emotion. By the same token, in Vietnam, there is drizzle regularly in spring. Vietnamese also do not feel comfortable for this kind of rain. In fact, there is a relation between emotion and color in terms of conceptual metaphor (Kövecses, 2000, 2003, 2005; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1989; Berlin & Kay, 1969; Davidoff, 2006; Dedrick, 1998). Specifically, it is found that BLUE IS SADNESS/DEPRESSION. In other words, *sadness* is associated with *blue*; moreover, the negative emotion people experience in the seasons mentioned earlier. As consequence, it comes as no surprise that a COLORED OBJECT is associated with the projection of SEASON. In short, although SEASON is an abstract object from perspective of physical season, it here is depicted a colored object.

#### 4.3. Olfactory Object

Olfactory object is understood as an object that has odor perceived by human’s olfactory organ.

Like COLORED OBJECT, as the corpora show, the SEASON conceptualization through a SCENTED OBJECT is applicable in English and Vietnamese. Although the conceptual metaphor SEASON IS AN OLFACTORY OBJECT is found in both languages, the mappings of olfactory object in Vietnamese are supported by more metaphorical expressions, with 15 expressions, five times as many as those in English, with 3 cases. The domain of an olfactory object can be illustrated by the following examples:

- (12) *Smelled the Spring on the smokey wind.* (McColl, Dirty Old Town)
- (13) *I smell winter on his breath.* (Cullimore, I Smell Winter)
- (14) *Trong hương xuân ta vẫy chào.* (Nguyễn Ngọc Thiện, Mùa xuân ơi)  
‘We greet each other with spring scent’
- (15) *Hương mùa xuân lan tỏa, gọi hồn ong bướm qua.* (Quốc Nam, Chơi vơi)

*'The scent of spring spreads and calls for the soul of bees and butterflies'*

(16) *Mà e nhớ hương mùa thu.* (Cung Tiễn, Nguyệt Cầm)

*'But maybe miss the fragrance/scent of autumn.'*

The expressions (12) and (13) refer that *spring* and *winter* can be perceived via their odors, based on the sense of the verb *smell*. In addition, the meaning from the noun phrases *hương xuân* in (14), *hương mùa xuân* in (15) and *hương mùa thu* 'scent' evokes that people are able to perceive these seasons through their scent. It is noticeable that the SEASON is conceived as smelling object in English, but we have no idea exactly which smell it is. Unlike English data, the other data reveals that Vietnamese people identify SEASON with its scent or odor, which gives rise to the metaphor SEASON IS A SCENTED OBJECT in Vietnamese in particular, by employing the noun *hương* 'scent' with 15 out of 16 frequencies in total. It can be understandable because Vietnam belongs to the tropical weather pattern. It means that it becomes warmer with a great deal of drizzle, which makes every living creature grow and develop properly, human life also becomes lively. For example, *hương mùa xuân lan tỏa* "the scent of spring spreads" in (15) implies that plant and trees flush, which appeals to insects, including bees and butterflies as the sense of the rest expression: *gọi hồn ong bướm qua*.

#### 4.4. Tasty Object

In addition to scented object, tasty object is discovered in the corpora to be used to map onto the entity SEASON. According to CALD, taste means 'to have a particular flavor'. Thus, tasty object here is understood as thing having certain flavor. The available evidence in the data reveals that SEASON in both languages is viewed as TASTY OBJECT, exactly as FOOD or DRINK, in particular. In English, SEASON is perceived as an object with SWEET taste, which is manifested via all of 10 expressions, with 36 frequencies of the word *sweet*. Similarly, *ngọt* or *ngọt ngào* 'sweet' are widely employed in Vietnamese, with 3 out of 6 cases in total. Besides, the other lexemes, namely *đậm đà*, *nồng*, *đắng* are found to describe the entity SEASON. In other words, SEASON is perceived with various tastes in Vietnamese, compared with the other language although English data possess more expressions than Vietnamese data do (10 and 6 expressions respectively). The following instances are some illustrations.

(17) *And the love of our lives*

*In the sweet summertime.* (Seger, *Night Moves*)

(18) *She's like a sweet summer.* (Band, *Chasing the Sun*)

(19) *Em là cánh én mỏng*

*'You are a thin swallow*

*Chao xuống giữa đời anh*

*Hover down in the middle of my life*

*Cho lòng anh xao động*

*Making my heart flutter*

*Thành mùa xuân ngọt ngào.* (Hoàng Hiệp & Diệp Minh Tuyên, *Mùa chim én bay*)

*Making a sweet spring.'*

(20) *Ghi từng phút mùa xuân đậm đà.* (Hoài An, *Ngày xuân thăm nhau*)

*'Remember every moment of the tasty spring'*

(21) *Thu nhuộm đắng cô đơn với sầu.* (Nguyễn Tuấn, *Tôi yêu mùa thu*)

*'Autumn stains bitter with loneliness and sadness'*

As mentioned above, *sweet* is the only taste used to modify SEASON in English. In fact, it is also used for *summer* like in (17) and (18) where *sweet* is the attribute of summer entity, i.e., *sweet summertime* and *sweet summer*. It is likely that for Westerners, summer is the season of happy love when the love relationship develops, and the lovers wish to be closer to each other. Obviously, closeness is considered essential to love (Ben-Ze'ev & Goussinsky, 2008). Accordingly, the lovers experience their sweet love in this season, which results in the metaphor SUMMER IS A SWEET OBJECT in English. Likewise, the lexeme *ngọt* or *ngọt ngào* 'sweet' is employed to interpret SEASON in Vietnamese as discussed earlier; however, the feature is mainly available for spring like in (19). Because Vietnamese people may consider spring as the season of happy couples. In this time of a year, it becomes warmer and every living entity develops rapidly. Moreover, Tet 'Lunar New Year' occurs in this period when people meet each other happily and when love often flourishes. Maybe that is the reason why SPRING is conceived as an object with sweet taste. In addition, the expressions in (20) and (21) refer to describing SEASON as a tasty object with its tastes, namely *đậm đà* 'tasty' in (20), and *đắng* 'bitter' in (21).

#### 4.5. Existence

*Existence* here can be understood as “something that exists; a being or entity” (CALD). There exists metaphor SEASON IS EXISTENCE in the two languages. Noticeably, the data statistics show the far differences in quantity of expressions. Precisely, English corpus comprises 44, out of 151 expressions regarding concrete entity, meanwhile there are 3 cases out of 137 expressions in Vietnamese. Obviously, the mapping of EXISTENCE in English is supported by much more metaphorical expressions, compared to Vietnamese. Surprisingly, the adverb *here* is used with a significantly high frequency, i.e., 47 times in English data while it is totally absent in Vietnamese. Consider some examples below:

(22) *Spring is here.* (Chaplin, *Spring Song*)

(23) *Summer's here, the light is raising.* (Downie, *Summer's killing us*)

(24) *Because autumn's here.* (Corrigan, *Autumn's Here*)

(25) *Winter is here, close of play.* (Davies, *End of the season*)

The adverbial *here* in the examples show that SEASON is comprehended a corporeal entity that really is existent in a certain place. It means that the authors of these songs can recognize spring, summer, autumn, or winter via their eyes. In other words, these songwriters are able to see the seasons above when they appear within their visibility.

Like *here*, some other adverbs are deployed to portray the entity SEASON, i.e., *there, everywhere* in English. Besides, the verb *exist* is also exploited to map onto SEASON with a significant frequency (5 times), which gives rise to the metaphor SEASON IS EXISTENCE. It can be seen in the sentences below:

(26) *Spring is everywhere.* (Kaye, *Spring fever*)

(27) *Summer exists in a doorway.* (Downie, *Summer's Killing Us*)

(28) *Is it winter there?* (Mendel, *Summer's End*)

Unlike in English, as mentioned above, there are only 3 metaphorical expressions supporting this SEASON conceptualization with two lexemes, namely, *khắp nơi* ‘everywhere’ and *còn* with 2 frequencies in Vietnamese as follows:

(29) *Bạn ơi mùa xuân khắp nơi tươi đẹp quá.* (Phạm Tuyên, *Đảng cho ta mùa xuân*)

‘Spring everywhere is so beautiful.’

(30) *Tôi chợt nhớ ra mùa thu đang còn.* (Trần Văn Lộc, *Bỏ quên mùa thu*)

‘I suddenly remember that autumn is still available’

The phrase *khắp nơi* in (29) has the same meaning as *everywhere* in (26) in English. Accordingly, the expression refers to depicting *mùa xuân* ‘spring’ as an entity that is present everywhere where the songwriters come. In addition, SEASON is experienced as something existent by using verb *còn*, which is not applicable in English in this case. Therefore, it is not easy to have a literal translation into English for the expression (30), and its English translation equivalent maybe is *I suddenly remember that autumn is still available/ existent*.

In brief, in terms of concrete entity, SEASON is conceptualized as an *existence* which exists somewhere although it is not a concrete object in deed.

#### 4.6. Possessed Entity

It is noteworthy that data statistics prove the conceptual metaphor SEASON IS A POSSESSED ENTITY is applicable in the English data, holding 17 expressions with 40 times of appearance whereas this metaphor is totally absent in the Vietnamese data.

(31) *We had the summertime of our lives.* (Sipe, *Summertime of Our Lives*)

(32) *The last time I had autumn I had you.* (Small, *The last time I had Autumn*)

(33) *I have winter in my heart.* (Christian, *Winter in my heart*)

The expressions from (31) to (33), containing lexeme *have* whose meaning is “to hold or maintain as a possession, privilege, or entitlement” as cited from CALD, give rise to the metaphor SEASON IS A POSSESSED ENTITY. To be more specific, the possessors in these expressions treat *summertime*, *autumn*, and *winter* as valuable things they want to get for their own. In other words, SEASON is interpreted as a valuable commodity, which is associated with Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980a) words when they discuss *time* underlying *money* in the Western societies.

## 5. Conclusion

The study identified the metaphors of season in English and Vietnamese in terms of season as concrete entity. In total, there are 6 metaphors of season found from the two corpora. TIME, as a matter of fact, has been considered as a target domain in the studies related to conceptual metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Evans, 2004; Kövecses, 2005, 2010; Li, 2014; Walinski, 2014, etc.). Therefore, that SEASON, a concept of time, is metaphorically perceived with widespread application in both languages is understandable. The findings are coherent with Lakoff’s statement (1993): “metaphorical mappings vary in universality; some seem to be universal, others are widespread, and some

seem to be culture specific.” (p.245). However, it is obvious that the concept SEASON, as it is shown through the corpus data, is conceptualized with much more complexity than the Lakoffian thesis of CMT assumptions (Khajeh, 2013).

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