

A Cognitive-Semantic Study of Expressions Associated with “黑暗/Darkness” in Chinese and Vietnamese

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ABSTRACT: Darkness is a familiar natural phenomenon, and it is also the foundation for many symbols and metaphors in language. However, comparative studies of perceptual metaphors related to "黑暗/darkness" in Chinese and Vietnamese are still limited. Based on the theory of perceptual metaphors, this study analyzed and compared the usage of "黑暗/darkness" in the two languages. The results show that, in addition to the original meaning of the phenomenon of lack of light, both generalize "darkness" into many abstract conceptual domains; Chinese often leans towards socio-political contexts, while Vietnamese emphasizes images rich in emotions, associated with personal experiences. These findings not only complement the metaphorical study of perception but also contribute to elucidating the cohesive relationship between language, culture, and how people perceive the world.

KEYWORDS: 黑暗; darkness; conceptual metaphor; mapping; embodiment

1. INTRODUCTION

"Darkness" is a familiar natural phenomenon in human life. However, beyond its original meaning as a state of shortage of light, "darkness" has long been a foundational concept for many symbols and metaphors in language, literature, and cultural thought. The visual experience of being blinded by darkness, combined with feelings of insecurity and fear, has led to the concept being frequently generalized to abstract conceptual domains such as cognition, emotion, society, or morality. Thus, the study of "darkness" is not only meaningful in linguistics but also shows how humans, through language, create and reflect worldviews.

Barcelona (2000) discusses the metaphorical conceptualization of "light," which necessarily implies a contrast with "darkness." However, the notion of "darkness" itself is only mentioned and has not been analyzed in depth. Deignan, A. (2005) systematically surveys the "dark" in English, identifying three basic maps: (1) the unknown *is dark*, (2) unhappiness *is dark*, and (3) evil *is dark*. However, these results are still general, requiring more extensive research. Notably, Qin, X. G., & Huang, X. Y. (覃修桂、黄兴云, 2008) in their study *Comparative Comparison of the Concept of "Darkness" between English and Chinese* indicate that although English and Chinese have many similarities in the metaphorical maps of "darkness", differences also exist. English tends to use "darkness" to perceive more abstract concepts, while Chinese expresses a balance between "darkness" and "light".

However, to date, there is still a lack of comparative studies on "黑暗/darkness" between Chinese and Vietnamese. This poses an academic gap that needs to be filled. The survey and comparison of the perceptual metaphor of the word "黑暗/darkness" in Chinese and Vietnamese not only helps to clarify the similarities and differences in the way of perceiving the world, but also contributes to affirming the connection between the language, thinking, and culture of the two peoples.

2. THEORY OF PERCEPTUAL METAPHORS

Metaphor is often seen as a decorative rhetorical measure for discourse. However, an important turning point came when Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980) published *Metaphors We Live By*, which laid the foundations for the theory of perceptual metaphors, with metaphorical thesis ubiquitous in everyday life. At the core of metaphor is *the mapping* from one familiar domain of experience (*source domain*) to another domain of experience (*target domain*), through which people can perceive and emphasize the characteristics of abstract concepts on the basis of experience.

Inheriting and developing this approach, Barcelona, A. (2000; p. 356) emphasizes that it is the relationship between the source domain and the target domain that allows the conceptual structure and attribute characteristics of the source domain to

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be selectively transferred to the target domain, providing the basis for the formation and expression of abstract concepts. From another perspective, Shu, D. F. (束定芳, 2000; pp.30-31) argues that "metaphor is not merely a linguistic phenomenon, but also a powerful cognitive tool, helping people to systematically reorganize their knowledge and interpret the objective world".

An important basis of this theory is the theory of embodiment, developed by Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999) in *Philosophy in the Flesh*. Embodiment asserts that the entire human conceptual system is based on bodily experience, so that the perceptual metaphor can operate through the mapping between experiential domains, allowing for the visualization and expression of abstract concepts by concrete experiences in life.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is carried out on the basis of the theory of perceptual metaphor, which considers metaphor as the mapping from a specific source domain to an abstract target domain in the thought process. Language materials are collected from many sources: (1) classical and modern literary works in Chinese and Vietnamese, (2) Chinese and Vietnamese dictionaries to determine the original and extended meanings, (3) journalistic language, and everyday words to reflect modern usage, including 140 cases of "黑暗" in Chinese and 126 cases of "darkness" in Vietnamese.

The study combines three main methods: (1) cognitive semantic analysis to identify and classify perceptual metaphors related to "黑暗/darkness"; (2) comparison methods to determine the similarities and differences between the two languages; (3) statistical methods to determine the distribution rate, thereby clarifying the universality and specificity in linguistic and cultural thinking.

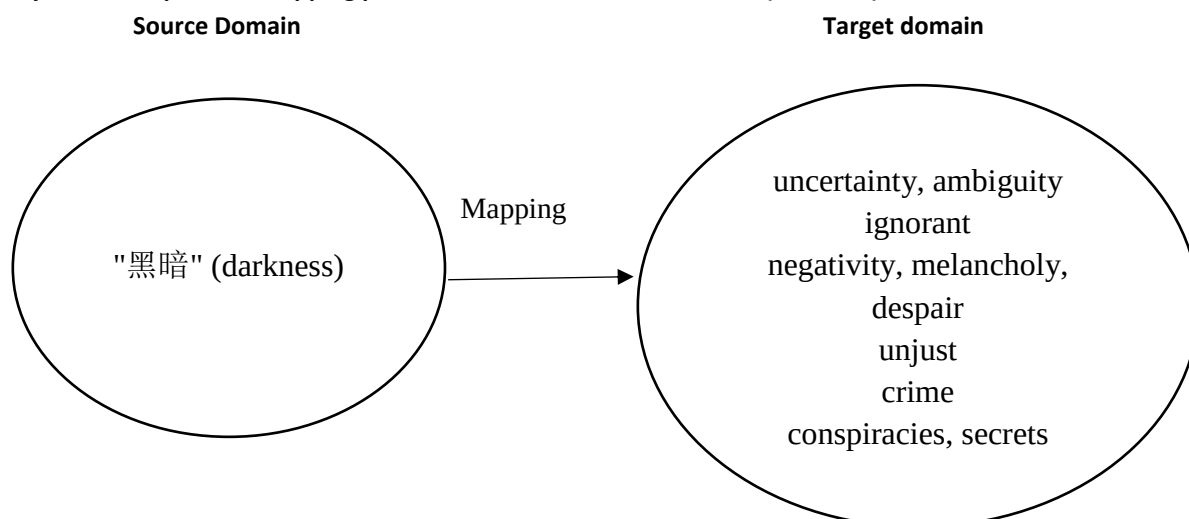
OVERVIEW OF THE WORD "黑暗/DARKNESS" IN CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE

In Chinese, the word "黑暗" (darkness) is composed of two elements, "黑" (*black*) and "暗" (*dark*), both of which are directly related to the absence of light. The word "黑" (*black*) appears very early in the Oracle Bone Script (甲骨文), with the original shape resembling the ash of smoke left after the object was burned. In *Shuowen Jiezi* (说文解字), "黑" (*black*) is interpreted as "玄也", which means dark, non-translucent color. "暗" (*dark, gloomy*) is not listed separately in *the Exegesis*, but in later texts, the word is synonymous with "光" (*light*), which refers to a weak, unclear state of light.

In terms of meaning, "黑暗" (*darkness*) is first used to describe physical phenomena such as dark night, fog, dark clouds, etc., because they all have the common characteristics of obscuring vision, obstructing light, creating a sense of ambiguity, mysticism, and even fear. However, besides the literal meaning, "黑暗" (*darkness*) is also frequently extended to the figurative meaning. According to *the Dictionary of Modern Chinese* (2012) and the *Dictionary of Modern Pragmatic Chinese* (2001), "黑暗" (*darkness*) is also used to refer to negative phenomena in society, such as "腐败" (*corruption*), "黑暗势力" (*dark forces*), or "黑暗统治" (*oppressive regime, unfair*). This reflects the tendency to associate "黑暗" (*darkness*) with negative political and social concepts. In Vietnamese, the *Vietnamese Dictionary* (2003) defines "darkness" mainly literally, as the part of space without light, and rarely extends to socio-political figuratives.

In short, compared to Vietnamese, Chinese emphasizes the multi-meaning nature of "黑暗" (*darkness*), especially the layers of meanings that carry negative social and political colors. On the contrary, "darkness" in Vietnamese is still more literally associated with natural phenomena, less associated with the social plane. This reflects the differences in perception and culture of the two languages: if Chinese exploits "黑暗" (*darkness*) as a metaphor to critique injustice, evil, and depravity, Vietnamese is more about expressing physical states, sometimes extending to psycho-spiritual meanings, but not emphasizing socio-political nuances.

4. Analysis of metaphorical mapping patterns of words related to “黑暗” (darkness) in Chinese and Vietnamese



4.1. The source domain “黑暗/darkness” mapped to the target domain indicates uncertainty, ambiguity in perception, and fate

In both Chinese and Vietnamese, “darkness” is a natural phenomenon, and the lack of light makes it impossible for people to see or distinguish things. From this experience, “darkness” is generalized into a metaphor for uncertainty, ambiguity in perception and fate, where people fall into a state of disorientation and helplessness before the future.

In Chinese literature, images such as “漆黑” (*black*), “暗无天日” (*darkness without seeing the sun*), “前途黑暗” (*dark future*), “黑暗中摸索” (*groping in the dark*) often express the ambiguous and insecure state of life. Example:

(1) 夜色沉沉,四下一片漆黑。 (《红楼梦》)(*Gloomy night, four surfaces and one solid black*) (*A Dream of Red Mansions*).

Here, “漆黑” (*black black*) not only depicts the scenery but also predicts tragedy and an unknown fate.

In Vietnamese literature, expressions similar to “Tối mịt mù” (*boundless darkness*), “đen như mực” (*black as ink*), and “mịt mù” (*blindness*) are also associated with the ambiguity and uncertainty of fate. For example:

(2) “Trời tối mịt mù, trăng sao mờ nhạt / Một mảnh hồn đau giữa bóng tối mênh mang.” (*The sky is pitch-dark, the moon and stars are faint / A fragment of a soul in the vast darkness.*) (Nguyen Du, *The Tale of Kieu*).

Here, the darkness symbolizes the suffering and obscurity of human life.

In addition, both languages use “darkness” as a metaphor for an uncertain future:

(3) 在命运的黑暗中, 我们只能一步一步地往前走。 (余华, 《活着》)

(*In the darkness of fate, we can only move forward step by step*) (Yu Hua, *Must live*).

(4) My person at that time seemed to be thrown into a dense area of darkness, without an exit.” (Yuan Hong, “*The vast of people*”).

Thus, both Chinese and Vietnamese are based on the experience of “darkness = loss of vision” to form a metaphor for the unknown, ambiguity, and hopelessness. However, Chinese tends to use many generalized fixed phrases such as “前途黑暗” (*dark future*), “黑暗中摸索” (*groping in the dark*), while Vietnamese often exploits expressions rich in images and personal emotions such as “inky black” and “no exit”. This difference reflects the unique characteristics of the conceptualization and expression of the two languages.

4.2. The source domain “black” maps to the target domain, indicating ignorance, and lack of knowledge

From the experience of ambiguity and uncertainty, “darkness” in both Chinese and Vietnamese continues to be conceptualized as a metaphor for ignorance, lack of knowledge. When there is a lack of light, people cannot perceive things clearly, from which the “dark” image is expanded to indicate a state of blurred perception and poor intellect.

In Chinese, expressions with “melancholy” are very rich, often combined with the elements “暗” (*dark*) and “昏” (*lose consciousness*) to distinguish various levels of ignorance “暗昧” (*stupid, blind*), “暗弱” (*stupid, weak*), “昏庸” (*ignorance*), “昏头昏脑” (*blurred mind*), “愚昧黑暗” (*dark stupidity*), “黑暗无知” (*dark and inanimate*). For example:

(5) 尽思量不若不思量, 尽言语不如不言语; 总是来回地想着, 来回地说着, 也只是无知暗昧。(冰心, 《冰心全集第一卷》) (*The more you think, the more you talk, the more you talk is not the same as silence; you keep thinking over and over again, talking over and over again, and in the end, you are just ignorant.*) (Bing Xin, *The Complete Collection of Bing Heart*, vol. 1).

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In Vietnamese, many expressions also associate "darkness" with ignorance, such as: "*u tối*" (*dim*), "*tối dạ*" (*slow-minded*), "*mờ mịt*" (*obscure*), "*mù quáng*" (*irrational*), "*dốt nát tối tăm*" (*utter ignorance*), "*mịt mờ trí tuệ*" (*obscured wisdom*), "*đen tối vô tri*" (*dim awearness*). Example:

(6) "*Mẹ tôi bị dày vò trong sự tối tăm, không hiểu gì về cuộc sống bên ngoài, chỉ biết phục tùng mà không dám phản kháng*" (*My mother was tormented in darkness, did not understand anything about life outside, and only knew how to obey without daring to resist.*) (Nguyen Hong, *Red Ribbon*)

(7) "*Bà cụ Mich đã già yếu, đầu óc mờ mịt, không còn biết đâu là phải trái nữa*" (*Mrs. Mich is old and weak, her mind is blurry, and she no longer knows what is right and left*). (Ngo Tat To, *Land*).

In short, in both Chinese and Vietnamese, "darkness" is conceptualized as a metaphor for ignorance and ignorance, reflecting the universal connection between lack of light and lack of knowledge. The difference lies in the fact that the Chinese language develops many systematic word combinations, such as "暗昧", "昏庸", "愚昧黑暗", creating a clear, nuanced stratification in expression. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese often use adjectives and adverbs rich in images and emotions, such as "dark", "blurry", "dim", emphasizing personal, specific, and associated with daily life. This difference reflects the linguistic and cultural characteristics of each community.

4.3. The source domain "darkness" maps to the target domain for negative, melancholy, and desperate emotions

The psychological state of people is often strongly influenced by the natural environment, especially the weather. Dark days and prolonged heavy rain often evoke feelings of sadness, heaviness, and can easily lead to negative thoughts. From that feeling experience, both Chinese and Vietnamese developed the use of "darkness" as a metaphor to symbolize feelings of pessimism, melancholy, and despair.

In Chinese, expressions such as "黑暗的日子" (*dark days*), "最黑暗的时光" (*darkest moments*), "心灵的黑暗" (*darkness in the soul*), or "黑暗笼罩" (*encompassing darkness*) are often used to describe negative mental states. Modern literature has many proofs:

(8) 黑暗的日子里，他甚至忘记了微笑。（余华，《在细雨中呼喊》）

(*In dark days, he even forgets how to smile*) (Yu Hua, *Calling in the Rain*)

(9) 那是一段最黑暗的时光，整日愁云惨雾，连阳光都透不进心底。（张爱玲，《红玫瑰与白玫瑰》）

(*It was the darkest time; all day long, the clouds were gloomy, and even the sun could not penetrate the bottom of the heart.* Zhang Ai Ling, *Red Rose and White Rose*)

In Vietnamese, similar expressions are also very rich, often associated with words such as "dark", "gloomy", "dim", "obscure", or visually evocative images such as "inky dark". Example:

(10) "*Bầu trời u ám như tâm trạng tôi, không một tia hy vọng*" (*The sky was as gloomy as my mood, without a glimmer of hope.*) (Nguyen Thi, *Children in the family*)

According to Ngo Tat To, the "darkness" is thoroughly exploited as a metaphorical image reflecting the desperate situation of Ms. Dau:

(11) "*Buông tay, chị vội choàng dậy, mở cửa chạy té ra sân. Trời tối như mực và như cái tiền đồ của chị.*" (*Letting go, she hurriedly got up, opened the door, and fell into the yard. It was as dark as ink and like her forerunner.*) (Ngo Tat To, *Turn off the lights*)

The above examples show that both Chinese and Vietnamese are based on the experience of "darkness" as a space that lacks light, evoking fear and insecurity, to generalize into a metaphor for feelings of pessimism, melancholy, and despair. However, Chinese tends to emphasize abstraction, while Vietnamese favors expressions rich in images and personal emotions, such as "dark as ink", "overcast sky", "without a ray of hope", closely tied to the specific experience of daily life.

4.4. The source domain "darkness" maps to the target domain for an unjust society and oppressive regime

In both Chinese and Vietnamese, "darkness" not only evokes a physical lack of light, but is also often used as a metaphor to reflect injustice, oppression, and alienation in social life. The human experience in the darkness with limited vision, feelings of suffocation, insecurity, and fear are shifted to the social plane, where authoritarian power and unjust mechanisms cause people to fall into the same state.

In Chinese, expressions such as "黑暗统治" (*dark regime*), "黑暗时代" (*dark age*), or "黑暗势力" (*dark forces*) are often used to criticize unjust and tyrannical regimes. Example:

(12)或表现为反抗黑暗统治、反对反动暴政，减轻或解除本国、本民族人民的苦难。（... or manifested in the resistance to the dark regime, against reactionary tyranny to alleviate the suffering of the people.） (People's Daily Newspaper, 1990).

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In Vietnamese, corresponding expressions also appear with high frequency, such as “chế độ đen tối” (*dark regime*), “thời kỳ tăm tối” (*dark period*), “một tương lai đen tối” (*a dark future*), associated with social and political contexts. Example:

(13) “Tôi xin kính cẩn nghiêng mình tưởng nhớ linh hồn của hàng triệu đồng bào, các chiến hữu... đã hy sinh trong sứ mệnh quốc tế giải phóng Campuchia thoát khỏi chế độ đen tối này.” (*I respectfully bow to remember the souls of millions of compatriots and comrades... sacrificed in the international mission to liberate Cambodia from this dark regime.*) (Youth of the Capital Newspaper, 2024).

(14) “Những cuộc chiến tranh liên miên... trở thành bóng tối bao trùm đất nước Israel. (Báo Dân Trí, 2018)” (*Constant wars... became the darkness that embraced the whole nation of Israel.*) (Dan Tri Newspaper, 2018).

By comparison, it can be seen that both languages use “darkness” as a metaphor to refer to unjust societies and oppressive regimes. However, in Chinese, these phrases often appear in the form of fixed idioms or phrases, rich in generality and with clear socio-political criticism, while Vietnamese, in addition to the political level, also expands to the cultural-historical level, emphasizing the expressiveness and sense of “embraced” of oppression.

4.5. The source domain “darkness” maps to the target domain for crimes and illegal acts

In both Chinese and Vietnamese, “darkness” is often used as a metaphor for crime, evil, and illegal acts. The experience of darkness, where it is difficult for humans to see, everything is hidden, and potentially dangerous, has been conceptualized into the image of the underworld, where evil and illegal acts exist.

In Chinese, word combinations containing “黑” (*black*) and “暗” (*dark*) are rich, reflecting the connection between “darkness” and evil. For example: “黑心” (*dark heart*), “黑手” (*black hand*), “黑帮” (*gangster*), “黑市” (*black market*), “黑钱” (*dirty money*), “黑幕” (*black curtain*), “黑社会” (*gangster*), “黑道” (*black line*), “黑吃黑” (*refers to disputes between underground powers*). Example:

(15) 这一场官商勾结的黑幕，最终被媒体揭露。 (*The dark veil of the collusion with the businessman was finally exposed by the media.*)

In Vietnamese, similar expressions are also widely used, such as “xã hội đen” (*gangster*), “chợ đen” (*black market*), “tiền đen” (*dirty/black money*), “công ty ma” (*shell company*), and “hợp đồng ngầm” (*hidden contract*). Example:

(16) “Vấn nạn doanh nghiệp ‘ma’: Thách thức đối với kinh tế và pháp luật.” (*The Problem of 'Shell' Enterprises: Challenges for Economics and Law.*) (Law Newspaper, 2025).

(17) “Công khai mua bán xe không giấy tờ trên chợ mạng: Kẽ hở cho kẻ xấu phạm tội” (*Publicly buying and selling cars without licenses on the online market: A loophole for gangsters to commit crimes.*) (People's Police Newspaper, 2024).

(18) “Nhận diện 7 thủ đoạn ‘rửa tiền’ được tội phạm sử dụng trong giai đoạn hiện nay.” (*Identify 7 'money laundering' tricks used by criminals in the current period.*) (Legal Review, 2025).

Through comparison, it can be seen that the Chinese language tends to associate “黑/暗” with a series of fixed compound words to describe criminal behaviors and underground forces, forming a general and stable vocabulary system. Meanwhile, although Vietnamese does not create as many fixed compound words as Chinese, it is flexible in combining with “black”, “shell”, and “underground/hidden” to create expressions close to social reality, reflecting directly on daily life.

Notably, from attachment to evil and illegal behavior, “darkness” is also expanded to the field of “secrets and conspiracies”. The essence of this connection lies in the experience of feeling that darkness always hides things, making them difficult to identify, just as illegal activities or conspiracies often lurk in the dark.

4.6. The source domain “black” maps to the target domain for conspiracies, secrets, and concealment

In both Chinese and Vietnamese, “darkness” is not only associated with uncertainty or crime, but is also often used as a metaphor for intrigue and concealment. This is a generalization based on human cognitive experience. In the dark, people are difficult to observe, and behaviors are easily obscured, thereby creating associations with insidious and shady activities.

In Chinese, this phenomenon is reflected in many symbolic words such as “暗号” (*innuendo*), “暗中/暗里” (*in the dark, in secret*), “暗线” (*underground line*), “暗探” (*spy*), “阴谋” (*conspiracy*), or the idiom “明争暗斗” (*fighting openly but implicitly harming*). Example:

(18) 他们通过暗线联系，不敢在公开场合露面。 (*They communicated through an underground line, not daring to appear publicly.*)

(19) 宫廷里明争暗斗，充满了各种阴谋。 (*In the palace, there was both open struggle and insidious fighting, full of conspiracies.*)

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In Vietnamese, there are also many corresponding expressions such as “mật hiệu” (codename), “ngấm ngầm/ lén lút” (insidious/stealthy), “đường dây ngầm” (underground line), “âm thầm” (silent), “mật thám” (secret spy), “việc khuất tất” (hiding), “thư nặc danh” (anonymous letter). This usage is quite common, for example:

(20) “Nhận diện âm mưu, thủ đoạn chiến tranh tâm lý thời kỳ mới.” (Identifying conspiracies and tactics of psychological warfare in the new era.) (People's Police Newspaper, 2024).

(21) “Nhận diện hoạt động ngân hàng ngầm tại Việt Nam” (Identification of underground banking activities in Vietnam.) (Journal of Banking Science & Training, 2015).

(22) “Xử lý nghiêm hành vi lợi dụng đơn thư nặc danh để tố cáo sai sự thật.” (Strictly handle acts of taking advantage of anonymous letters to make false denunciations.) (People's Army Newspaper, 2025).

Through the above comparison, it can be seen that the Chinese language tends to systematize “light and dark” opposition, forming many fixed combinations associated with power relations and underground struggle. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese often exploit “darkness” to emphasize concealment in social and personal life, reflecting the shady, trickery, and unpredictability of covert acts.

4.7. The “darkness” source domain maps to the target domain for helplessness and fear

In both Chinese and Vietnamese, “darkness” is generalized as a metaphor for helplessness and fear. The experience of perception in a dark environment, limited vision, hindered action, and loss of control have formed the basis for the formation of this concept. Therefore, darkness often symbolizes a state of confusion, anxiety, and fear of the unknown.

In Chinese literature, images such as “黑暗吞噬意志” (darkness swallows the will) or “黑暗包围” (enveloping darkness) are often associated with helplessness and fear, for example:

(22) 我挣扎着想要爬起来,可是黑暗吞噬了我的意志,让我动弹不得。 (I struggled to get up, but the darkness devoured my will and made it impossible for me to move.) (Lu Xun, *Scream*).

(23) 夜深了,他蜷缩在角落,黑暗包围着他,让他无比恐惧。 (Late at night, he cowered in a corner, the darkness that enveloped him was extremely afraid.) (Yu Hua, *Must live*).

In Vietnamese literature, there are also many similar usages, such as “bóng tối đặc quánh” (dense darkness), “tối như mực” (dark as ink), associated with a state of anxiety and hopelessness, for example:

(24) “Mỗi đêm, tôi lại sợ bóng tối và những tiếng động lạ, như thể có ai đó đang theo dõi mình.” (Every night I was afraid of the dark and strange noises, as if someone were watching me.) (Bao Ninh, *The sadness of war*).

(25) “Con người tôi khi ấy như bị quăng vào một vùng bóng tối đặc quánh, không có lối thoát.” (My person at that time was thrown into a dense area of darkness, with no way out.) (Nguyen Hong, *The vast of people*).

In addition to fear, “darkness” in both languages is associated with the spiritual world and death. In Chinese, the words “暗阴” (gloomy), “幽暗” (dark, gloomy), “阴森” (dim) are often used to refer to the underworld or demon gods, for example:

(26) 这片古老的森林...一到夜晚,便陷入彻底的暗阴之中,传说是鬼魂栖息的地方。 (This ancient forest... at night, it is plunged into darkness, which is said to be the place where the soul resides.) (Bo Tung Linh, *Strange Tales from Liaozhai*).

In Vietnamese, the words “gloomy”, “dark”, and “dim” are also often used to describe spooky spaces:

(27) “Bóng tối dày đặc bao trùm nghĩa trang, chỉ có tiếng cú kêu thê lương giữa đêm khuya.” (Thick darkness enveloped the cemetery, and the only sound of an owl crying in the middle of the night.) (Nam Cao, *Chi Pheo*).

Thus, both Chinese and Vietnamese use “darkness” as a metaphor for helplessness, fear, and belief in the mystical world. However, Chinese is more about codification in the language, while Vietnamese exploits emotional images, reflecting differences in how the same experience is conceptualized and expressed.

5. DISTRIBUTION OF COGNITIVE METAPHOR GROUPS OF “黑暗 / DARKNESS” IN CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE

The table below presents the frequency of occurrence of seven groups of perceptual metaphors related to “黑暗 / darkness” in Chinese and Vietnamese literature. The data were compiled from literary works, journalism, dictionaries, and everyday language, thereby reflecting how the two languages exploited the phenomenon of “darkness” in different conceptual domains.

Table 1: Distribution of cognitive metaphor groups of "黑暗/darkness" in Chinese and Vietnamese

STT	Metaphorical Group	Chinese (number of cases)	Rate (%)	Vietnamese (number of cases)	Rate (%)
1	Uncertainty, ambiguity in perception/fate	28	20%	22	18%
2	Ignorant, lack of knowledge	24	17%	26	21%
3	Negative emotions, hopelessness	30	22%	35	28%
4	An unjust and oppressive society	25	18%	15	12%
5	Crimes and illegal acts	18	13%	12	10%
6	Conspiracies, secrets, concealment	9	7%	8	6%
7	Fear, helplessness, supernatural	6	3%	8	5%
Total		140	100%	126	100%

From the table above, it can be seen that "黑暗/darkness" is generalized into many abstract conceptual domains. However, the difference is also quite obvious, Chinese focuses more on socio-political fields such as unjust society (18%) and crime and illegal behavior (13%), while Vietnamese is more inclined to meaning fields associated with personal perceptions and emotions, such as negative emotions, desperation (28%) and ignorant and ignorance (21%). Notably, the group of negative emotions was prominent in both languages (22% and 28%), suggesting that "darkness" was first associated with a pessimistic mental state, while groups such as conspiracies, secrets, or fears, and the supernatural accounted for a lower proportion, reflecting a narrow range of use. These findings not only shed light on the universality and specificity of the perceptual metaphor but also demonstrate the difference in destination between the two languages, with Chinese emphasizing social criticism and Vietnamese emphasizing personal emotions. Thereby showing the close connection between language, culture, and thinking.

6. CONCLUSION

Through comparative analysis on the basis of the theory of perceptual metaphors, it can be seen that "黑暗/darkness" in Chinese and "darkness" in Vietnamese not only stop at the original meaning of the natural phenomenon of lack of light, but are also generalized into many layers of rich metaphorical meanings. The results of the study show that both languages use "darkness" to express abstract concepts associated with cognition, emotions, and society, including uncertainty and ambiguity, ignorance and ignorance, negative emotions, unjust fates, crime, etc, Secret conspiracies, as well as helplessness and fear.

Through research, it can be affirmed that the conceptual metaphor is not only a linguistic tool but also a means of thinking, reflecting the worldview and cultural values of the community. At the same time, the comparison also shows the difference in the orientation of perception between the two peoples. Chinese focuses on social criticism, while Vietnamese is more about expressing personal moods. The research contributes to filling the academic gap in the field of cognitive linguistics while clarifying the connection between language, culture, and how people construct ideas from life experiences.

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