

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
UNIVERSITY OF DANANG

TRẦN XUÂN TRƯỜNG

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO
METONYMY DENOTING HUMANS
IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE POETRY**

Field : THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
Code : 60.22.15

MASTER THESIS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
(SUMMARY)

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. PHAN VĂN HÒA

DANANG, 2011

The thesis has been completed at the College of Foreign Languages, University of Danang.

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. PHAN VĂN HÒA

Examiner 1: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Luu Quy Khuong

Examiner 2: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Truong Vien

The thesis was defended at the Examining Committee.

Time: September 9th, 2011

Venue: University of Danang

The original of thesis is accessible for the purpose of reference at the College of Foreign Languages Library, and the Information Resources Center, Danang University

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE

Poetry, together with fiction, drama, music and other artistic works, has long been a spiritual necessity of human beings. Poetry not only brings pleasure and joyfulness to our soul but it also expresses the spiritual depth of poets' feelings and emotions. Poetry helps prevent us from mental aging and from the stress of the busy life. However, poem readers often find it hard to understand and to grasp the language of poetry. There is so much to be done in reading poems since the language of poetry is often carefully selected to make it more expressive, emotional, and effective. Poets have also used a large number of rhetorical devices in order to make their work more valuable and worth-reading.

There is a fact that Vietnamese learners of English and foreigners learning Vietnamese find it difficult to grasp the poem's ideas and moods through metonymic expressions. Therefore, understanding metonymic mechanism will help a lot in dealing with the experience of poetry, the interpretation of poetry, and the evaluation of poetry. All these things have aroused my interest in researching the topic: *"An Investigation into Metonymy Denoting Humans in English and Vietnamese Poetry"*.

1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1. Aims

The study is aimed at examining metonymic expressions denoting humans in English and Vietnamese poetry.

1.2.2. Objectives

This study is intended:

- To identify and to describe syntactic and semantic features of metonymic expressions in English and Vietnamese poetry.

- To compare and contrast metonymic expressions denoting humans in English and Vietnamese poetry to clarify the similarities and differences of these metonymic expressions.

1.3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study provides teachers and learners of English a thorough point of view towards metonymy denoting humans in poetry in cognitive linguistics approach.

1.4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study will observe and describe some commonly used types of means for expressing metonymies denoting humans in English and Vietnamese poetry. The corpus source for this research is chosen from poems in English and Vietnamese.

1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Which are the commonly used types of metonymic expressions denoting humans in English and Vietnamese poetry?
2. What are the similarities and differences in syntactic and semantic features between English and Vietnamese metonymic expressions denoting humans?
3. What is the implication of the study for the teaching and learning of English?

1.6. ORGANIZATION OF STUDY

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature and theoretical background

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

Chapter 4: Findings and discussion

Chapter 5: Conclusions

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

Lakoff and Johnson [23] described metonymy as a process which allows us to conceptualized one thing by means of its relation to others.

Kovecses and Radden [21] pointed out the conceptual basis of metonymy with the term “conceptual frame” or “Idealized Conceptual Models”. This view point was developed by Mendoza and Díez [29] who clarified the term of low-level and high-level metonymy.

Võ Thị Thu Duyên [9] studied and contrasted the use of metonymy in both English and Vietnamese. However, she had limited her scope of study in the use of metonymy in English and Vietnamese short stories without any concern on metonymy in English and Vietnamese poetry. Nguyễn Thị Yến Hồng [17] took into account of low-level and high-level metonymy in English and Vietnamese newspapers without giving the distinction between propositional and situational metonymies in both low-level and high-level metonymies.

2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1. Definition of Metonymy

Lakoff and Johnson [23] define metonymy as the use of one entity to stand for another which is related to it. In their view, metonymy has a primarily referential function, but it also contributes to understanding.

Blank [7] considers metonymy as “a linguistic device based on

salient conceptual relations within a frame network” [7, p.174]. In this definition, Blank points out that “salient” is an important notion in the view of metonymy.

Radden and Kövecses [21] adopt the view that metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same idealized cognitive model.

Our working definition is based on the definition of metonymy proposed Kovecses and Radden [21, p.39] as the followings:

Metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain, or ICM.

2.2.2. Figures of Speech

Metonymy was traditionally regarded as a figure of speech, so an account of figures of speech is indispensable in our study.

2.2.3. Metonymy as a Referential Phenomenon

Metonymy involves only one conceptual domain (mapping occurs within a single domain, not across domains) and is used primarily for reference. Via metonymy, one can refer to one entity in a schema by referring to another entity in the same schema.

2.2.4. Metonymy in Cognitive Linguistics

Metonymy, like metaphor and other tropes, is not just a figure of speech, but reflects an important part of the way people ordinarily conceptualize of themselves, events and the everyday world.

2.2.5. Metonymy in Poetry

The literary technique known as metonymy is most often used in poetry to draw attention to a word or idea by slightly changing the diction that the poet uses. A slight change in word choice can cause

big changes in the way that the reader perceives a concept within a poem. Metonymy can accomplish this, often by abstracting an underlying idea or making it larger than life.

2.2.6. Metonymy and Cultural Background Knowledge

Metonymy is a common cognitive process that reflects one of the many ways in which human beings categorize knowledge and communicate. Metonymic principles provide an explanatory tool for understanding inferences.

2.2.7. Metonymy versus Other Ways of Meaning Transference

2.2.7.1. Metonymy versus Metaphor

Metonymy works by the contiguity (association) between two concepts, whereas metaphor works by the similarity between them. When people use metonymy, they do not typically wish to transfer qualities from one referent to another as they do with metaphor: there is nothing press-like about reporters or crown-like about a monarch, but "the press" and "the crown" are both common metonyms.

2.2.7.2. Metonymy versus Synecdoche

Synecdoche is used when people speak of a part of something but mean the whole thing. Metonymy is similar, but uses something more generally or loosely associated with a concept to stand in for it.

2.3. SUMMARY

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, English is chosen as the first language. A contrastive analysis of metonymic expressions in English and Vietnamese poetry was executed in this study

3.2. SAMPLING

The sampling was done with selecting and collecting instances of metonymic expressions in English and Vietnamese poetry.

3.3. DATA COLLECTION

A collection of metonymic in the two languages based of secondary and primary sources was done. Metonymic expressions were collected from poems both in English and Vietnamese.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

After being selected the material, the samples of the adjectives and their collocations as modifiers of noun phrases were examined, classified, described, analyzed and compared to enable the comparison to find out the similarities and the differences in terms of syntactic and semantic features.

3.5. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

3.6. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Data collection is mainly based on the observation of instances of metonymic expressions in a limited number of English and Vietnamese poetry. Most of linguistic and grammatical books are reliable.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. METONYMIC EXPRESSIONS IN ENGLISH POETRY

4.1.1. Types of Metonymic Expressions in English Poetry

4.1.1.1. The Part for the Whole

(4.10) *Nay, if you read this line, remember not*

The hand that writ it; for I love you so, [2, p.70]

In (4.10), *hand* is the organ which is used to refer to *the writer*

or the person that does the writing. In this case, metonymy is based on the mapping of body part – for – the whole person.

4.1.1.2. A Whole Body for a Part of the Body

In contrast to part-for-whole metonymy, English poets also use the whole body part to stand for some typical parts.

(4.23) *As he swung toward them holding up the hand*

Half in appeal, but half as if to keep

The life from spilling. [82, p.74]

4.1.1.3. A place for Inhabitants

It is common that English poets often use the name of many places to refer to the people associated with those places.

Place-for-inhabitants metonymy is also popularly used through the use of proper nouns. The name of the nations, states, cities, provinces or even name of streets can well stand for people:

4.1.1.4. Institution for People

Like *place for inhabitant* metonymy, an institution can stand for the people involved in that institution. That reference can be military troop, the government or an organization.

4.1.1.5. Container for People Contained

We also find cases when English poets use a container to refer to the people contained. As a result, *house* and *family* are usually used to indicate the people in the house or the family.

4.1.1.6. Color for People

We also encounter cases when English poets use colors to refer to the people with those complexions. This type of metonymy is similar to part-for-whole metonymy but the part of the body (the skin) is omitted.

4.1.1.7. Object Used for User

This type of metonymy is popularly found in English poetry thanks to the understandable contiguity from the close relation of the object and the person using that object.

4.1.1.8. Author for His Work

In nature, authors and the work of these authors are closely connected. When we encounter the name *Picasso* or *Toulouse*, we will think of some famous artistic works of these two famous artists. Also, the writer uses the name of the famous music composer *Bach* to refer to some of his masterpiece.

4.1.2. Syntactic Features of Metonymic Expressions in English poetry

4.1.2.1. Syntactic patterns of Noun phrases as Metonymic Expressions

Metonymic expressions can be included in the semantic value of the head of the noun phrase and modifiers. From the analysis we found that the modifiers including in a noun phrase are fairly essential because, on the one hand, the syntactic slot is filled, and, on the other hand, they are an indispensable part of the description that serve to pick out the implied meaning of an utterance. For this meaning, in our paper, the modifiers that precede and follow the head noun are taken into consideration. The syntactic function of these modifiers is known as pre-modification and post-modification.

4.1.2.2. Syntactic Functions of Metonymic Expressions as Noun Phrases

Metonymic NP functioning as a subject

Metonymic NP functioning as a direct object

Metonymic NP functioning as a subject complement

Metonymic NP functioning as a prepositional object

4.1.3. Semantic Features of Metonymic Expressions in English Poetry

4.1.3.1. Transfer of Metonymic Expressions' Meanings

Metonymy derives from the way human conceptualized the world. The first way of meaning transfer in metonymy is the whole-part configuration including the relations in an ICM as the whole and its elements. The second way describe the relation between two elements within an ICM, the part-part configuration.

4.1.3.2. Metonymy as a Referential Phenomenon

Metonymy involves only one conceptual domain (mapping occurs within a single domain, not across domains) and is used primarily for reference. This viewpoint shows the cognitive difference between metonymy and metaphor. In metonymy, we can refer to one entity in a schema by referring to another entity in the same schema.

(4.85) *In the room the women come and go*

*Talking of **Michelangelo**.*

[18, p.1263]

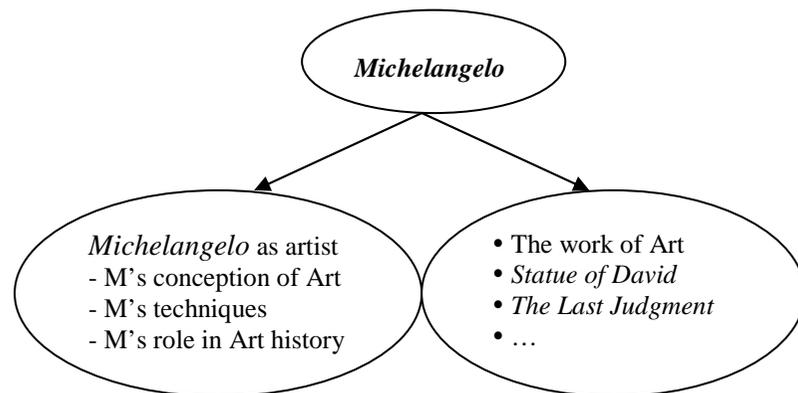


Figure 4.2. Referential Meaning of Producer-for-Product Metonymy

4.1.3.3. Metonymy as a Polysemous Phenomenon

Via metonymy, the meaning of words may extend from a small entity to a larger entity as in part-for-whole relation or vice versa. The result of this a word may have two or more senses that are related to each other. This phenomenon of different semantic mappings (meanings) come from the same phonological form (word) is known as polysemous phenomenon.

Table 4.4. Polysemy of metonymic 'Face'

Metonymic expression	Metonymic relation	Examples
FACE	People in general	<i>Every face in the village is dimpled with smiles</i>
	Appearance	<i>With dreadful faces thronged, and fiery arms Concours in Arms, fierce Faces threatening Warr</i>
	Personality	<i>The age to come would say, "This poet lies, Such heavenly touches ne'er touched earthly faces."</i>
	Emotion/ mental state	<i>We wear a face of joy, because We have been glad of yore</i>

[18, p.1263]

4.2. METONYMIC EXPRESSIONS IN VIETNAMESE POETRY

4.2.1. Types of Metonymic Expressions in Vietnamese Poetry

4.2.1.1. A Part of a Thing for the Whole Thing

(4.90) *Đàn bà dễ có **mấy tay**,*

*Đời xưa **mấy mặt** đời này **mấy gan**?*

[45, p.148]

4.2.1.2. Place for Inhabitants

- (4.108) *Ba Đình nước nở và rờng rờng nước mắt*
Muôn vằn tình thân yêu trùm lên khắp quê hương [100, p.80]
4.2.1.3. Institution for People
- (4.112) *Đội áo tím sông Hương diệt Mỹ xong bỗng bồi hồi kinh ngạc*
Khi biết tiếng súng mình tai Bác vẫn hằng nghe [100, p.79]
4.2.1.4. Container for Contained
- (4.115) *Vì sao trái đất nặng ân tình*
Nhắc mãi tên người Hồ Chí Minh [41, p.479]
4.2.1.5. Controller for Controlled
- (4.117) *Nich-Xon! Mày có thể đốt cháy Trường sơn*
Không thể ngăn đường, lấp biển [41, p.495]
4.2.1.6. Author for His Work
- (4.119) *Gió heo may trong cành đa lao xao tìm gọi nắng*
Lê-nin trên bàn đang chờ đón Bác đi vào. [100, p.79]
4.2.1.7. Object Used for User
- (4.123) *Cho gương mời đến Thúc lang,*
Mặt như chàm đỏ, mình giường giẽ run. [45, p.146]

4.2.2. Syntactic Features of Metonymic Expressions in

Vietnamese Poetry

4.2.2.1. Syntactic Patterns of Noun phrases as Metonymic Expressions

4.2.2.2. Syntactic Functions of Metonymic Expressions as Noun Phrases

Like English metonymic noun phrases, metonymic expressions in Vietnamese poetry can function mainly as subject, direct object and subject complement. We can clarify these functions of Vietnamese metonymic noun phrases as follow:

Table 4.6. Syntactic functions of the metonymic Noun Phrases in Vietnamese Poetry

Function of Metonymic NPs (210)	Occurrence	Frequency
Subject	86	41.0%
Direct object	109	51.9%
Complement	15	7.1%

4.2.3. Semantic features of Metonymic Expressions in Vietnamese Poetry

4.2.3.1. Transfer of Metonymic Expressions' Meanings

Similar to metonymic expressions in English poetry, metonymic expressions in Vietnamese poetry is viewed from the model of cognitive linguistics. Metonymic transfer is examined as a structure of conventional conceptual mapping from the source domain to the target domain. In order to understand the meaning of metonymic expressions, we have to see the relationship between the domains in an ICM. In fact, we are easy to recognize metonymic meaning the way people conceptualize the world in an ICM.

4.2.3.2. Metonymy as a Referential Phenomenon

(4.154) *Đứng lên thân cỏ, thân rom*

Búa liềm không sợ súng gươm bạo tàn. [41, p.341]

It is obvious that *hammer and sickle* in (4.154) actually refers to the persons who holding this object in their hands but does not involve the attribution of human qualities to these objects. Consequently, the defining characteristic of metonymy is referential, as this OBJECT USED-FOR-USER metonymy fundamentally

involves the use of one entity (*hammer and sickle*) to refer to another, related entity (*human*).

4.2.3.3. *Metonymy as a Polysemous Phenomenon*

Like polysemous phenomenon of metonymic expressions in English poetry, metonymic transfer in ICMs also relates to logical polysemies. The mechanism of polysemy is based on a natural feature of thought: selecting one aspect of an object in particular does not exclude the other aspects and the whole.

Table 4.8. Polysemy of Metonymic ‘Tay’

Metonymic expression	Metonymic relation	Examples
TAY	Physical condition	<i>Tôi hoảng sợ ngày bàn tay mẹ moi Mình vẫn còn một thứ quả non xanh</i>
	Possession	<i>Hai bàn tay trắng, nên cơ nghiệp Một tấm lòng son, quyết giữ gìn</i>
	Social status	<i>Phẩm tiên rơi đến tay hèn, Hoài công nắng giữ mưa gìn với ai</i>
	Skill/ talent	<i>Kiểu vâng lĩnh ý đề bài, Tay tiên một vẫy đủ mười khúc ngâm.</i>
	Labor	<i>Hỡi những người trai, những cô gái yêu Trên những đèo mây, những tảng núi đá Hai bàn tay ta làm nên tất cả !</i>
	Helping	<i>Đánh liều nhấn một hai lời, Nhờ tay tế độ vớt người trầm luân.</i>
	Caring	<i>Lũ chúng tôi từ tay mẹ lớn lên Còn những bí và bầu thì lớn xuống</i>
	Occupation	<i>Cũng nhà hành viện xưa nay, Cũng phường bán thịt, cũng tay buôn người</i>

4.3. CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF METONYMIC EXPRESSIONS IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

4.3.1. Similarities

Both English and Vietnamese can make use of a great variety of noun phrase structures to encode the metonymic expressions. Noun phrases as metonymic expressions in both English and Vietnamese can have pre-modification and post-modification. In both languages we can find similar constituent members of noun phrases such as quantifiers, demonstratives, cardinals and adjectives.

Finally, we pay high respect to semantic similarities. We have discussed the matters of metonymy in English and Vietnamese under the framework of cognitive view where by metonymic expressions serves as a reference point which affords mental access to the desired target. The selection of a metonymic expression as metonymic reference point is made using certain principles of cognitive salience in the analysis of the instances of metonymic expressions in both English and Vietnamese.

Metonymy is used in both languages to express all the aspects related to human beings: their physical appearance, personalities, social class, occupations, activities, and their feelings and emotions.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

(4.162) *I'd reveal to you the young minds
that have expanded under your care* [92]

(4.163) *Những mái tóc vàng, những mái tóc nâu
Chẽ nửa mắt xanh nháy nhót trên đầu* [111]

PERSONALITY

(4.166) *The markets, the government, the working-man's wages
to think what account they are through our nights and days!* [84]

(4.167) *Áo nâu liền với áo xanh*
Nông thôn cùng với thị thành đứng lên. [41, p.342]

ACTIVITY

(4.170) *Blue-veined hand with which I write*
Yet answers to my will; [70]

(4.171) *Kệ kinh câu cũ thuộc lòng,*
Hương đèn việc cũ, trai phòng quen tay [45, p.131]

HELPING

(4.172) *And she is far too proud to pray*
For helping hand [69]

(4.173) *Chiến hòa sắp sẵn hai bài,*
Cậy tay thầy thợ mượn người dò la [45, p.90]

MENTAL STATE/ EMOTIONS

(4.174) *Your arms are wrapped around me,*
And everything feels right [71]

(4.175) *Lòng thơ lai láng bồi hồi,*
Gốc cây lại vạch một bài cổ thi [45, p.12]

4.3.2. Differences

Table 4.11. Comparison of Types of Metonymy in English and Vietnamese Poetry

English (210)			Vietnamese (210)		
Patterns	Occu- rency	%	Patterns	Occu- rency	%
Body parts for person			Body parts for person		
- Face for person	18	8.57	- Face for person	34	16.19
- Eyes for person	14	6.67	- Eyes for person	10	4.76
- Head for person	15		- Head for person	13	6.19

- Hair for person	10	7.14	- Hair for person	9	4.29
- Heart for person	21	4.76	- Heart for person	23	10.95
- Hands for person	32	10.00	- Hands for person	25	11.90
- Other parts (soul/ mind/ cheeks/ lips/ tongue/ mouth/ legs/ feet)	24	15.24	- Other parts (soul/ cheeks/ lips/ mouth/ back/ legs/ feet)	22	10.48
Place for people	16	7.62	Place for people	18	8.57
Organization for people	9	4.29	Organization for people	12	5.71
Color for people	7	3.33	×		
Container for people contained	8	3.81	Container for people contained	7	3.33
×			Controller for controlled	6	2.86
Object used for user	18	8.57	Object used for user	21	10.00
Author for works	15	7.14	Author for works	10	4.76

Secondly, though our corpus only concerns metonymic expressions in form of noun phrase there are distinguishing features between the two languages. With respect to syntactic functions, we see that metonymic noun phrases functioning as subject, direct object, and subject complement are typical in English as well as in Vietnamese. However, the conception of prepositional object is found only in English metonymic expressions. In addition, syntactic structures of metonymic noun phrases in the two languages are not all the same. We can have a look at the table below:

Table 4.12. Comparison of Syntactic Patterns of English and Vietnamese Metonymic Expressions

English (210)			Vietnamese (210)		
Patterns	Frequ -ency	%	Patterns	Frequ -ency	%
Noun without Modifier			Noun without Modifier		
- Proper Name	22	10.48	- Proper Name	24	11.43
- Ø Noun Ø	26	12.38	- Ø Noun Ø	35	16.67
Noun with Pre-modifiers			Noun with Pre-modifiers		
- The + Proper Name	18	8.57	- Quantifiers + Noun	51	24.29
- The + Noun	16	7.62			
- The + Adj + Noun	23	10.95			
- A + Noun	12	5.71			
- A / An + Adj + Noun	14	6.67			
- Quantifier + Noun	19	9.05			
- Quantifier + of + Noun	7	3.33			
- Determiner + Noun	9	4.29			
- Possessive	15	7.14			
Pronouns + Nouns					
- Every + Noun	5	2.38			
- All + Noun	11	5.24			
			Noun with Post-modifiers		
			- Noun + Adjective	49	23.33

Noun with Pre-modifiers and Post-modifiers			Noun with Pre-modifiers and Post-modifiers		
- The + Noun + of + Noun	8		- Quantifier + Noun + Adjective	26	12.38
			- Quantifier + Noun+Possessive genitive	9	4.29
			- Quantifier + Noun + embedded clause as modifier	4	1.90
Adjective as Head Noun					
- The + Adjective	11	5.24			
Compound Noun	6	2.86	Compound Noun	12	5.71

While metonymic expressions in Vietnamese can make use of modifications in both directions, those in English are found to be more restricted to pre-modification. Except for metonymic expressions with OF-CONSTRUCTION like '*the face of either cipher'd either's heart*', '*the rod of empire*' we rarely found instances of metonymic expressions with post-modification in English. This may be because of the fact that post-modification in form of restrictive clause, participle clause, adjective clauses or phrases can create more explicitness for the antecedent. The matter is that the description of the entity in the source domain is just enough so that the addressee can be invoked in the mapping process to access to the target referent and at the same time he/she can maintain the attention to partial scene that the metonymic expression figures in our mind.

4.4. SUMMARY

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

From what has been analyzed and presented in the foregoing chapter about the syntactic and semantic features of metonymic expressions denoting humans in English and Vietnamese poetry, we would like to draw some conclusions about the similarities and differences of these units and then put forward some implications to the English teaching and learning.

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

5.1.1. Characteristics of Metonymic Expressions in English and Vietnamese Poetry

Metonymy is more pervasive and important, cognitively and rhetorically than it has usually been noted. As we have analyzed, metonymic patterns are matters of relatively inconsequential word substitutions such as the part for the whole, the container for the contained, the place for the people, and the like. These substitutions supply elegant variation in speech and writing without seeming to alter much in the meaning.

Syntactically, we have showed that the major function of metonymy is referential which is fulfilled typically by noun phrase structures. In syntactic structure, the modifier-head relations are a high precision feature for recognition of metonymic expressions. In both English and Vietnamese, noun phrase structures can have modification in both directions though post-modification is hardly applied in English while this kind of modification is a predominant feature in Vietnamese metonymic expression. Also, while this post-modification allows a fairly free shifting of the characteristics from the entity implicit in the target domain to the entity explicit in the

source domain, this characteristic seems to be a constraint in the use of participle modification in English noun phrases.

Semantically, metonymic expressions can make use of nearly all types of ICMs with relations between the source domain and target domain. From the data analysis, we notice that there are many correspondences in conceptualizing and producing of metonymic expressions among English and Vietnamese writers. In both languages, writers use a part-for-whole metonymy most often when they come to describing people through their parts of the body. In fact, any person can successfully be identified from any part of their body. Take for example, someone showing you a photograph of the face of a little girl and saying "That's my daughter." You smile and never think that you've used a metonymic process to comprehend that the face of a person stands for the whole person. Imagine you had been shown a picture of the girl's foot and they had said "That's my daughter!" Yet, if someone says "Get your butt over here," again by processing metonymically, we know exactly what they mean.

5.1.2. The Influences of Cultural Features on Metonymy

Metonymy, like metaphor and certain other tropes, is not just a figure of speech, but reflects an important part of the way people ordinarily conceptualize of themselves, events, and the everyday world. Metonymy helps structure various aspects of inference generation in discourse, as well as people's understanding and use of contextual expressions, indirect speech acts, common gestures, and colloquial tautologies. However, the way people conceptualized the world much depends on the background knowledge and the culture of each country. For example, America used to be familiar with the term 'racism' for a long time. As a result, we often come across the

mapping Color-for-People metonymy. Likewise, Vietnamese people often use special clothes according to their social class or their social position. People in Viet Bac often wear ‘áo chàm’, a student is accustomed to the uniform ‘áo trắng’, a farmer is in ‘áo nâu’, and a worker usually wears ‘áo nâu’. These features seem to be unique in Vietnamese society; and the metonymic concept of user of those objects is commonly found in Vietnamese. Another example that shows the influence of cultural features on metonymy in Vietnamese is the expression ‘đầu xanh’ as in the following verse:

Đầu xanh đã tội tình gì

Má hồng đến quá nữa thì chưa thôi. [45, p.136]

Vietnamese people consider ‘hair’ as an important feature of their appearance. The concept of aging is closed to the color of their hair, black hair for young people and grey hair for old ones. However, western people can not judge other people’s age according to their hair because any person at any age might have different hair: black, brown, blonde, or grey hair. Therefore, metonymic expression ‘đầu xanh’ (a young person) appears in Vietnamese poetry but not in English.

5.2. IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING CONCERNING THE USE OF METONYMIC EXPRESSIONS

Metonymy can present interesting challenges to all poem reader. The comprehension process involves not only identifying the possible interpretation allowed by the grammar, but also using contextual clues to eliminate some interpretations. Metonymy is also used to make sense of reference by association, so it forces the reader to work harder at making meaning in a text as well as in poetry.

Considering a metonymic noun phrase, the reader must have

acquired knowledge of what they have referred to a predicate analysis, the ability to determine the properties of the implied meaning to the head noun. In order to comprehend and to use metonymy successfully, good command of the language as well as social, political, and culture knowledge is necessary to Vietnamese learners of English.

5.3. SOME SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS FOR ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING

Through what has been presented about the potential difficulties for Vietnamese learners of English, following suggestions are drawn out to overcome these obstacles.

Firstly, teachers must be aware that the basis ICMs is very necessary for learners to interpret metonymic expressions in both English and Vietnamese. Therefore, the knowledge of ICMs should be priorly provided to learners. In fact, the two languages both have much in common in the ICMs as the universal conceptual structures to grasp metonymic meanings. Learners can have at their disposal linguistic means to express the mapping relations between the entity in the source domain and entity in the target domain. Also, the way the addressee’s attention to be directed to the desired target is similar in the two languages according to the principles of cognitive salience. With these assumptions in mind, we suggest that this essential knowledge should be provided to the Vietnamese learners of English as far as the need of using metonymic expressions is concerned. With knowledge about the ICMs and the language resources to express the metonymy, learners of English can have more confidence to perform language transfer and apply some of the transfer patterns.

Secondly, metonymy is a frequent but difficult stylistic device

in poetry. Therefore, a good knowledge of metonymy should be provided to all learners. Teachers need to give them all the types, the syntactic structures, and the meaning mechanism of metonymy in different contexts and situations. Also, teachers should make the students aware of the important of poetry in everyday life so as to recognize metonymy appearing in poems.

Thirdly, as metonymy is related to the way people concept the world, it is affected by the background of both the writer and the reader. The basic idea behind the usage of metonymy is that people create associations between a particular object and a related object. In the phrase “the pen is mightier than the sword,” for example, there are two instances of metonymy at work. “The pen” does not literally refer to a writing instrument, but instead refers to the process of writing and the expression of ideas, while “the sword” again does not mean a literal weapon, but instead refers to a military group or armed action. Someone who hears this type of phrase is typically able to understand what is meant, since these associations are quite common within a particular culture or society. As a result, the custom or culture of language community directly influence on this stylistic device. Therefore, in combination with the knowledge of language, English learners need to learn the customs and cultural aspects of the target language.

Lastly, in terms of meaning extension and lexical conversion, metonymy is of great value to vocabulary teaching. Teachers can illustrate the cognitive nature of metonymy, and guide students to explore the metonymic motivation of a word. This will help students to make clear the internal relationship among different meanings of one word, make reasonable cognitive reasoning, and gradually grasp

the language rules. In this way their learning efficiency will be greatly improved and their vocabulary amount will be expanded a lot.

5.4. LIMITATION OF THE THESIS AND FURTHER STUDIES

This thesis has focused on the issues of metonymic expressions in English and Vietnamese in terms of ICMs in the light of cognitive linguistics. However, due to the lack of the time as well as Vietnamese materials concerning metonymy in cognitive linguistics, only syntactic and semantic features of metonymic noun phrases have been mentioned. Also, little has been discussed about the constraints of metonymic expressions concerning the use of constituents of the noun phrase structures. Furthermore, with corpus selected from English and Vietnamese poetry, it is not sufficient for us to make generalizations about the typology of metonymy as a fundamental linguistic tool.

For a thorough insight into metonymy in English and Vietnamese, the following issues should be further concentrated:

- Pragmatic analysis of metonymic expression in English and Vietnamese.
- The influence of cultural features on the way English and Vietnamese people concept the world through metonymy.