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Visual Representations of Kövecses' Conceptual  
Metaphor "*Love is Fire*" in the Chinese Comic  
Old Master Q

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## Abstract

In the cognitive linguistic view, metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. (Kövecses, 2002: 4) This metaphor is called conceptual metaphor. Metaphor is conceptual in nature and has linguistic manifestations. But since languages can manifest themselves in non-verbal ways, conceptual metaphors can represent themselves in other than linguistic ways.

Comics are one rich source for the nonlinguistic realization of metaphors. In them, conceptual metaphors are often depicted “literally”. A person in love may be drawn as a man with red face. This paper investigates non-verbal manifestations of love in Chinese comic album *Old Master Q* in Kövecses’s theory, as well as other assumptions on LOVE IS FIRE. It demonstrates that the representations of love in comics are compatible with the most dominant concepts; English and Chinese share the same metaphor LOVE IS FIRE, which both follow the same way by talking about love by describing the psychological effects of this emotion; and besides the universality of metaphor in two different languages, there are differences through the study, which are called cultural variations.

*Keywords:* conceptual metaphor; love; fire; Chinese representation; universality; variation

## I. Introduction

The study of conceptual metaphors is one of the central strategies in the project of charting how human knowledge is organized because metaphors are verbal representation of thinking and reasoning which are shaped in interaction with culture. The first linguists who gave crucial

insights into the cognitive theory of metaphor are Lakoff and Johnson in 1980 in their seminal study: *Metaphors We Live By*. They found out that many verbal metaphors systematically reflect conceptual metaphors, but do not necessarily have the same form as these conceptual metaphors. That is, “what she said *left a bad taste in my mouth*” and “I just can’t *swallow* that claim” both reflect the underlying conceptual metaphor IDEAS ARE FOOD, with neither the word “ideas” nor the word “food” occurring in the metaphorical sentences (Forceville, 2003: 70). Later in 1986, Kövecses demonstrated in *Metaphors of Anger, Pride and Love* that verbal expressions and idioms about emotions could be traced back to a limited number of conceptual metaphors.

So far, much has been written on the emotion of anger (see, for example, Forceville, 2005; Yu, 1995; Kövecses, 1986, 1990). However, the metaphor of romantic love is relatively less researched. Among all these conceptual metaphors, e.g. “LOVE IS A JOURNEY”, “LOVE IS A NATURAL FORCE”, “LOVE IS FIRE”, we found that the FIRE metaphor is perhaps the most vivid one concerning the intensity of love. And we also find “LOVE IS FIRE” out of which the metaphor “I am *burning* with love” is constructed. This means that “fire and heat metaphors” are used to describe love. Kövecses (1986, 1990, 2002) delineates how people conceptualize love metaphorically in various languages and implies the conceptualization of emotions is shared to a universal extent. While a limitation of his research is that the postulated metaphorical models are exclusively based on verbal evidence, this article is to prove Kövecses’ assumption, as well as some common hypotheses, that love can be visually explained one to one in the form of comics.

Unlike verbal forms of communication, comics most often show a speech act in a relatively rich context of utterance. In the pictures of a comic strip, readers see a character, a facial expression, a body gesture, an

immediate setting and a broader context of the story, even though the readers and the artists speak different languages. Our second aim is therefore to investigate whether English conceptual metaphors can be manifested in a Chinese nonverbal way.

Finally, given the cultural context and its influence on conceptualization, we can see changes take place in cultural and conceptual metaphors. The reasons for variation are varied. We believe that there are more possibilities and they deserve more concerns and investigations.

## II. The Conceptual Metaphor “LOVE IS FIRE”

### A. Western Definition of Love

According to Kövecses’ theory, romantic love is “a feeling which is characterized by affection, enthusiasm, interest, longing and intimacy” (Kövecses, 1988: 139). He illustrates that the intensity of love, and several other emotions, is for the most part conceptualized in terms of the concept heat. Heat manifests itself primarily in the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS FIRE.

### B. Chinese Definition of Love

Chinese shares exactly the same metaphorical concept; LOVE IS FIRE is also applicable in Chinese, as illustrated by the following common examples, which are known by the vast majority of the Chinese population:

1. ài shì dōng tiān lǐ de yī bǎ huǒ.

Love is fire in winter.

2. ài shì huǒ néng shǐ bīng xuě róng huà.

Love is fire that melts the snow.

3. ài shì huǒ diǎn rán xī miè de dēng. Zhēn ài shì dēng zhào liàng yè xíng zhī lù.

Love is fire to enkindle the extinguished oil lamp. True love is the lit lamp to illuminate the way in darkness.

### C. The Correspondence between the Source and Target

Source: fire

Target: love

- the fire corresponds to love
- the thing burning is the person in love
- the cause of the fire is the cause of love
- being burned by the fire is the frustration caused by love
- the burning of the fire is the extent of love
- the intensity of the fire is the intensity of love
- the inability of the thing burning to function normally is the inability of the person in love to function normally

Some of those correspondences are possible because we seem to carry over our knowledge of the source domain to the target domain. For example, we know that a thing burned by fire is unable to function normally. Now when we carry this over to love we get the correspondence: the inability of the thing burned to function normally and the inability of a person in love to function normally are the same. That is, just as the thing consumed by fire is unable to function normally, so a person in love is unable to function normally. Further knowledge we have of fires is that they can burn us and can cause pain. In parallel, what we get is that love can also burn us and can cause pain. It is this metaphorical pain that we feel at the time of a frustrating love experience. The conceptualization of emotional pain as physical pain is again a very general conceptual metaphor in our conceptual system.

#### D. The Explanation of the Conceptual Metaphor

This conceptual metaphor highlights the intensity of love (fire, flame, sparks), the existence of love (on fire), the coming into and going out of existence of love (extinction of the flame), its duration (flame), the cause of love (ignition of fire), the frustration caused by love (get burned), and how it can render a person unable to function normally (consumed by fire).

Just as a fire can start, exist and stop, so we can conceptualize love as having a beginning, existence and an end. When the fire is kindled love begins. While the fire is burning, love exists. When it goes out, love ends.

Something that is burning can suddenly burst into flames. Flames can last for a very short time and then return to their original intensity or go out completely. Some of our love experiences are such that we love a person very intensely for a short time and then our feelings abruptly come to an end. These cases are called infatuation.

However, real fires are not such short-lived flames. They last and go on burning for a long time. We imagine real love to be a fire that burns a long time also. But a fire represents the top of a heat scale ranging from cold through warm to hot. And as a result of the correspondence between LOVE and FIRE, real love is always hot. In fact, it is so hot that it can even metaphorically melt us. Therefore, we can conclude that the particular appropriateness of the words “melt” and “consume” to express love’s intensity is motivated by two concepts that have to do with intensity: HEAT and EFFECT. In order for love to melt and consume us, which are effects, it needs the heat of fire. In these cases heat functions as cause, which leads to an effect.

There are many metaphors concerning the subject LOVE, for instance: Love is a unity; Love is a natural force; love is magic. Nevertheless, the FIRE metaphor is the most important metaphor concerning the intensity of

love. And since intensity plays a very remarkable role in the way we think of love both in western and eastern culture, the FIRE metaphor has a central role in the concept of love as a whole.

### III. Selection of Subject

The reason why we chose love as our subject is that love is the ultimate prize in life, love is the basis of every day life, and it gives us the power to feel so affectionately. And we especially focus on the ideal model of love, in which all the negative emotions (disappointment, embarrassment, sadness etc.) are neglected.

The ideal love state enables the lovers to view themselves as a unity composed of two complementary parts. It also enables them to live the relationship as a state of perfect harmony. Furthermore, lovers will experience the relationship as one in which they need each other on almost a biological level. They also believe that their love is true love, that the beloved is irreplaceable, and that their love will last forever. Love is seen by the lovers as an unbreakable emotional bond or tie which guarantees the stability of the relationship.

Furthermore, discussions about love are not as common as for other emotions in analytical literature, such as anger and pride, although it's one of the most pervasive emotions of human beings. We believe that there is room for further study.

In order to illustrate our theory clearly, we define the heat of ideal love in three stages: ignition, sparks and flame, in comparison with the three stages of love : having a favorable impression of each other, falling in love and becoming soul mates.

### IV. Physiological Effects Accompany Love



## A. Kövecses' assumption

An emotion is an acute disturbance or upset of the individual which is revealed in behavior and in conscious experience, as well as through widespread changes in the function of viscera (smooth muscles, glands, heart, and lungs), and which is initiated by forces within a psychological situation. (Young, 405)

Needless to say, all psychological phenomena ultimately depend on physiological processes.

Kövecses' assumptions of physiological effects that accompany love are increased body heat, increased heart rate, blushing, and interference with accurate perception. (Kövecses, 1986: 84) Of these, increase in body heat, blushing, and also indirectly increase in heart rate, serve as the experiential base for the FIRE metaphor. The appropriateness of the metaphor arises as a result of these physiological effects.

## B. Other Effects besides Kövecses' Assumption

### 1. Body Alignment

We show agreement, liking, and loyalty by aligning our upper body with a partner. Aiming the upper body conveys greater feelings of liking than when the body is angled away. Leaning forward suggests friendliness, while leaning backward sometimes expresses a feeling when a person is intoxicated. It normally occurs at the falling in love stage.

### 2. Shoulder-shrug

The shoulder-shrug is a sign of resignation, uncertainty, and submissiveness. Shrug cues may modify, counteract, or contradict verbal remarks. In courtship and rapport, the cues show harmlessness and friendly

intent, thus inviting physical approach and affiliation. And in some cases, shoulder-shrug expresses euphemistic refusal. This is generally used when couples favorably impress each other.

### 3. Self-touch

We unconsciously touch our bodies when emotions run high to comfort, relieve, or release stress. Lips are favorite places for fingertips to land and deliver reassuring body contact. Self-stimulating behaviors, such as, holding an arm or wrist, massaging a hand or scratching, rubbing, or pinching the skin, increase with anxiety and may signal nervousness or desire. Therefore this always occurs at the first stage: having a favorable impression of each other.

### 4. Smiling

Smiling is a more accurate reflection of mood. Moreover, it is an international sign that shows happiness, gladness, or friendliness. It aims at attracting sexual partners in the process of courtship and flirtation. In modified form (presented less seductively), it's a sign to help establish general rapport. Based on this peculiarity, smiling happens in all stages of love: when two persons have a favorable impression of each other, they smile to show friendliness; when they fall in love, they smile to show happiness; and when they becoming soul mates, they smile to show satisfaction.

### 5. Closed Eyes

Closed eyes are clear manifestations of intoxication or relaxation. When loving feelings are powerful, we often unconsciously close our eyes, e.g., when we look forward to a date or when we are kissing. Consequently, it obviously belongs to both stages of falling in love and becoming soul

mates.

## 6. Looking Each Other into the Eyes

A person's direction of gaze may indicate to others where his or her attention lies. Eye contact provides key emotional information; we continually probe each other's eyes and faces for positive or negative mood signs. The eyes have often been described as the “windows of the soul”, and in some contexts, gazing at another's eyes may arouse strong emotions. Lovers often gaze into each other's eyes for extended periods of time to show their intense affection. This phenomenon also shows up frequently when falling in love or becoming soul mates.

## V. Selection of Comics

### B. The Reason Why We Chose Comics

#### 1. What are Comics?

Before we explain the reason why we chose the form comics to show the physiological effects that accompany love we have to illustrate what comics are:

Comics are a form necessarily including the following elements: a narrative told by way of a sequence of pictures, a continuing cast of characters from one sequence to the next, and the inclusion of dialogue and/or text within the picture. (Waugh, 2002: 13)

#### 2. Deacon's Theory of Three Types of Signs

In his book *The Symbolic Species*, Deacon deals with consciousness as an emergent property of the virtual world created by symbols. He distinguishes three types of consciousness, based on the three types of

signs: iconic, indexical and symbolic signs. Iconic signs derive their meaning from the resemblance they bear to what they signify. A typical example of an iconic sign is a snapshot. Indexical signs are defined as signs that acquire their function through a causal connection with what they signify. For instance, a red face is an index of shyness. Symbolic signs are characterized a non-natural link between sign and referent. The example of a symbolic sign system is language.

Within comics, the pictures depict familiar objects in a realistic style, and contain icons; they depict an element that suggests the whole it stands for, e.g. the upper part of a person's body is an index for that person: they contain indexical signs; they make use of language and they contain symbols. In conclusion, comics can feature all types of signs. Since love is an abstract concept, it by definition defies iconic representation, and can only be rendered by means of indexical and symbolic signs. Therefore we opine that comics are the best choice that annotates the abstract concept of love.

### 3. Some Other Reasons

In the first place, human beings express their love not only with language but also in non-verbal pictures. Since comics exaggerate expression, so the state of ideal love can be fully displayed.

Secondly, different stages of love provide thousands of variants of stories and an endless source of humor in comics and cartoons.

Another reason is that comics rather than animated films are richer in pictorial symbols. Since animated films have both movement and sound to convey information, they have less need to resort to pictorial symbols than static pictures do.

Furthermore, comics are defined as a mass culture, enjoying a large readership among the public. Besides, the gestures of the characters in

comics deliver the same messages to the readers without any obstacle, be they in the west or east, so that comics are known as a worldwide language.

## B. Old Master Q

### 1. General Introduction

*Old Master Q* (Chinese: 老夫子) is a popular Chinese comic series created by Peng Di (Chinese name : 朋弟) in 1941. It was first published in newspapers in Tian Jin. In the year 1962, Alfonso Wong (Chinese name: 王澤/王家禧) continued to create *Old Master Q*. The cartoon first appeared in the newspapers and magazines in Hong Kong in 1962, and was later published in comic books from 1964. The comic is still in publication today. It has been on the comic sales ladder for a long time, and has become a staple of the international Chinese society.

The characters in *Old Master Q* comic series are usually portrayed in a variety of social statuses, professions and time periods, ranging from beggars and office workers to actors and ancient warriors, allowing a wide variety of settings and ideas.

A distinctive characteristic of old master Q is that he always easily falls in love and never hesitates to show his love. Varied expressions of love highlight this work as an organic whole and give birth to the humorousness. He resorts to enriched body gestures to express love, like flickering flame, sometimes exaggerated, sometimes implicit. For this reason, *Old Master Q* enjoys great popularity among Chinese people all over the world. That is also the reason why we have chosen it to illustrate our viewpoint.

### 2. Politics and Issues in *Old Master Q*

While *Old Master Q* comics primarily focuses on humor, they also reflect changing social trends, particularly from the 1960s to the 1980s. The comics would sometimes feature societal problems in urban life, such as poverty, petty thefts and secret societies. It also poked fun at fashion, contemporary art and rock music. Its circulation is not only to Hong Kong Chinese, but also to Chinese readers throughout Southeast Asia and among overseas Chinese communities. The language barrier, mostly between Chinese and English, was not overlooked either.

Combining slapstick, comical situations, and the unexpectedness of an absurd reality, this comic series has become a timeless classic for people of all ages.

In short, since *Old Master Q* is one of the most influential comic series accepted and adored by Chinese people all over the world, we chose this comic series to prove that the physiological effects corresponding to a western metaphor are also valid in Chinese culture. All the physiological effects listed above can be reflected in this comic series.

## VI. Pictorial Representations of Love in the Comic *Old Master Q*

Among 2,820 stories and 10 sets of comics in *Old Master Q* (dated before 1998), the number of topics on Love is over 80. Nearly 100 pictures portray love. These pictorial representations almost include the non-verbal manifestations of love that exist in real life.

### A. Connecting Pictorial Signs of Love to Kövecses' Assumption

Since intensity plays a very marked role in the way we think of love, the corresponding presence of physiological effects on the people in love is intensive. Kövecses (1986) illustrated four physiological effects in our

conceptual model: LOVE IS FIRE. They are: BODY HEAT, INCREASE IN HEART RATE, BLUSHING and INTERFERENCE WITH ACCURATE PERCEPTION.

### 1. Body heat

Body heat can be interpreted as a definite consequence of the burning of love fire inside. In a fiery or wild love affair our body temperature is assumed to become hot (Kövecses, 1986: 101). The related linguistic expressions are:

I felt *hot* all over when I saw her.

“I love you”, she whispered in the *heat* of passion.

Warmth is a period when the intensity of love fire decreases, which accords with our folk knowledge of physics, the temperature goes down too. When the fire is kindled love begins. The burning can suddenly burst into flames, but it can only last for a relatively short time and then return to mild temperature or even go out completely. Warmth is often felt in the period of marriage, as the examples below:

She feels *warm* all over when her husband comes home from work.

They created a *warm* family home for themselves and their children.

### 2. Increased heart rate

Body heat is not the only physiological effect characterizing love. Heartbeat jumps fast when people meet or think of the persons they love. Probably it is caused by the risen temperature of the body being burned by the fire of love. For example:

His heart *was throbbing* with love.

Her heart began to *pound* when she saw him.

### 3. Blushing

Blushing is assumed as the result of increased body heat and/or

heartbeat. The reason is obvious: while a person is warmed by fire, his/her body temperature increases, and then the face would easily turn red.

There was a *glow* of love in her face.

#### 4. Interference with accurate perception

We know that a thing burned by fire is unable to function normally. Either the constitution of the burned subject is broken down or the shape of it makes a change. Carrying it to love, the inability of a person in love to function normally is quite similar. The inaccuracy involves a lack of control on the body performance due to the fiery burning of the love fire. Examples are:

He *was blinded* by love.

I just *melted* when she looked at me.

#### B. Pictorial Signals of Love in the *Old Master Q*

These four pictures exaggeratedly but clearly interpret the intensity of love, in the correspondence of metaphor LOVE IS FIRE.



Fig. 1: (1) blushing; (2) increased heart rate; (3) dizzy.





Fig. 2: (1) sweat; (2) hear rate.



Fig. 3: warmth



Fig. 4: (1) increased heart rate; (2) dizzy.



Fig. 5: (1) increased heart rate; (2) body twist; (3) body trembling.

The little cluster of short lines on the face (Fig. 1) is an obvious cue for blushing, which is caused by increased body heat due to the fiery burning love. The sweat around the head of the girl in Fig. 2 is another hint of being burned by fire, which is obviously due to the expression of love. Warmth is not very intensive compared to heat, but it makes people feel comfortable. That is the reason why in Fig. 3, the couple in the wedding looks peaceful and harmonious. For them, affection is conceptualized as warmth when the flame of fire becomes smaller.

Increased heartbeat is usually portrayed in the shape of hearts around people. The shape of hearts can be found in most pictures in this comic, but Fig. 4 is the most exaggerated one. The faster the heart is beating, the more hearts is appearing, and even eyes are shaping like hearts.

The swirl above Old Master Q's head (Fig. 1) appears to represent the unclear mind of overheat by fire, like a person would feel faint when he had a fever. And the distinct feature in Fig. 5 is the short parallel lines around the whole body of Old Master Q. They represent the body is twisting. It is definitely the consequence of the flaming love inside. And these features also prove people's inability to function normally in romantic love. However, the parallel lines outside Old Master Q in Fig. 1 do not imply the body twist but the movement.

### C. Results

Table 1: Of 80 pictures in *Old Master Q* connected to Kövecses' assumption

Sweat	Blushing	Warmth (marriage)	Heart Symbol ( Increased heart rate)	Dizzy	Body Twist
4	7	3	56	8	10

Firstly, table 1 shows the distribution of the love signs. It is notable that "Heart Symbol" (increased heart rate) ranges the highest (the number

is five more times than that of the second range “Body Twist”). It becomes a unique symbol of love in both English and Chinese. In some situations, this symbol even substitutes the linguistic word of “love”. “Body Twist” and “Dizzy” appear far more frequent than “Sweat”. This indicates emotion can hardly be controlled by the people dwelt in love. “Warmth” is less present partly because the intensive period of romantic love is the intendance of painters. All the signals serve as the experiential base for the FIRE metaphor and the metaphor arises as a result of these physiological effects

Secondly, no pictorial sign can display love single-handedly: signs combine to suggest love, and the more signs are used, the more clear-cut or intense the love is. Conversely, a particular sign is not necessarily reserved for the expression of love alone. It can suggest a different emotion with different combinations of signs.

Thirdly, we can conclude that the pictorial runes signal literary expressions vividly and clearly. They are motivated rather than arbitrary. Any element of a picture consists of rich meaning that can be transferred to verbal words. Furthermore, pictures are more direct for readers to understand the information and deep meanings. The communication in this way is effective and successful.

Besides, the fact that signs are commensurate with LOVE IS FIRE does not mean that each single sign can only be interpreted in terms of this specific metaphor for love. Individual signs could also be understood as exemplifying other characters of love metaphor, or as exemplifying other metaphors. For instance, the short, paralleled lines around body (Fig. 5) would show the unsteady movements when the body is overheat. It can also be interpreted as extreme happiness when signaling HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER. (When the happiness is too full to be contained, it will flow out at any time. In this way, the container —— body

loses control and shakes)

Finally, we notice that six other visual signals appear highly in the comics (Table 2). Actually, the numbers are much more than those in Table 1. People in romantic love always feel sweet. Since “Smile” is a symbol of being triggered by inner sweetness or happiness, it is used most frequently by the caricaturist, which is even more than the use of “Heart Symbol”. Moreover, when they are smiling, they close their eyes as well. This can be interpreted as the reflection of controlling love fire to balance the raised heat inside. However, the connection between these six representations and the conceptual metaphor is not as tight as those of Kövecses’. We believe it deserves more concern and study.

Table 2: Of 80 pictures in *Old Master Q* connected to six other representations

Body Alignment	Shoulder -shrug	Self -touch	Smile	Closed Eyes	Looking at Each Other into the Eyes
40	11	36	69	54	12

## VII. The Universality and Cultural Variation in Metaphors

### A. The Universality of Metaphors

The connections of non-verbal signs in Chinese comic to English metaphor show that some metaphors exist in different languages and cultures. Metaphors as HAPPINESS IS UP, HAPPINESS IS LIGHT, HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER, and ANGER IS A PRESSURIZED FLUID OR GAS IN A CONTAINER have been proved universal (Kövecses, 1986, 2002; Emanatian, 1995; Gibbs, 1999).

The verbal expressions about LOVE IS FIRE can be found in many languages around the world as well, so this metaphor is potentially

universal:

German: Ich bin angesteckt mit der Flamme der liebe dem Feuer.

I am burning with the fire of love.

French: Mon coeur brule d'amour.

My heart is burning for love.

Turkish: O, aşk ateşi ile yanıyordu.

He was burning with love.

Russian: Lubov sjigaet tebia.

Love burns you.

Slovenia: On je goreo od ljubavi.

He was burning with love.

Albanian: TRUPI IM DIGJET I TERI NGA ZJARRI I DASHURISE.

My whole body is burning by the fire of love.

Greek: ΤΟ ΚΟΡΜΙ ΚΑΙΓΕΤΑΙ ΟΛΟΚΛΗΡΟ ΑΠΟ ΤΗΝ ΦΩΤΙΑ  
ΤΗΣ ΑΓΑΠΗΣ

My whole body is burning by the fire of love.

Chinese: tā mén zhī jiān de ài xiàng huǒ yī yàng rè liè.

Their love is as intensive as fire.

Korean: 사랑은 인생에 있어 비타민 처럼 영양제이고 인생의  
불꽃이다.

Love is like a Vitamin of your life and a fire of your life.

The universality does not happen by accident but for reasons. For one thing, the chemical and psychological reactions of people falling, being in love or losing love are similar. People experience increased heartbeat, body heat, or lack of control, which are the most obvious representations of burning fire. This results in the similarity of words in conversation or in literature. For another, since people never stop purchasing the expressions of emotional feelings for romantic love, they often look for its

correspondence in real life. In this case, the source domains are inevitably similar. For instance, to glorify the greatness and happiness of love, people always use positive words, such as flower, candy, spring, or light. People in love are been compared to birds in both English and Chinese:

English: Look at those two love doves on the bench over there!

Chinese: zhǐ xiàn yuān yāng bú xiàn xiān.

Only envy mandarin ducks that always appear in couple instead of being immortal. (Being a person in love is much more wonderful than a person who lives in the heaven and will never die.)

Among the various ways of conceptualizing love, the model according to which love is a UNITY OF TWO COMPLEMENTARY PARTS is perhaps central.

LOVE IS A UNITY (OF TWO COMPLEMENTARY PARTS)

*We are made for each other.*

*We are one.*

*She is my better half.* (Kövecses, 1986: 62)

In Chinese, these three corresponding expressions are:

Wǒ mén shì tiān zào dì shè de yī duì.

Wǒ mén shì yī tǐ de.

tā shì wǒ de líng yī bàn.

## B. Cultural Variation in Conceptual Metaphors

In addition to universality, there is also cultural variation in metaphors. Again, take LOVE IS FIRE as example, this metaphor highlights the intensity of love, which is explained as fire, flame, sparks and consume by Zoltán Kövecses. However, when the intensity of love decreases, the English expressions used for this situation are: the old-time fire is gone, the

fiery passion died down and gave way to warm affection, etc (Kövecses, 1986: 101). But there is a typical concept in Chinese, but not in English, for the disappearance of love fire: firework.

Chinese: ài qíng jiù xiàng yàn huǒ, duǎn zàn ér měi lì.

Love is like firework. It is beautiful but does not last for long.

Generally, we distinguish metaphor variation into two kinds: 1. cross-culture and 2. culture-specific.

### 1. Cross-Cultural Variation

There can be differences in the *range* of conceptual metaphors that languages and cultures have available for the conceptualization of particular target domains. This is what commonly happens in the case of emotion concepts as targets (Kövecses, 2002: 183, 184). The universality can only be explained to the general-level metaphors as LOVE IS A FIRE, but the specific representations are distinguishing in every culture.

The causes of cross-cultural variation consist of cultural context and natural environment. Cultural and natural environment shape a language, primarily its vocabulary; consequently, they shape the metaphors as well. Given a certain kind of habitat, speakers living there will be attuned (mostly subconsciously) to things and phenomena that are characteristic of that habitat; and they will make use of these things and phenomena for the metaphorical comprehension and creation of their conceptual universe (Kövecses, 2002: 187). When speakers move to a new and different natural and cultural environment, their vocabulary and ways of communicating will definitely change to different extent.

### 2. Within-Culture Variation

In the case of within-culture variation, the conceptualization of

emotion is not the same, not homogeneous within a culture or society. Individual usage may vary, and this variation keeps changing according to social factors through time.

In a country or society, the main value stream may change in different periods of time. It can be caused by the conscience awoken, requirement of social development, replacement of the ruling classes, or the influence from other cultures. For an individual, personal experience is one source of the variation. People have their professions, certain concerns and interests, and they will apply these to source domains and target domains. That is, personal history may, and often does, influence the choice of metaphors (Kövecses, 2002: 194). One example is Americans' impression of "frontier" throughout the history. Once men considered "frontier" as "the virgin without exploited", and women as "garden", but in 1990s, it was conceptualized as "new frontier" representing ideas of progress and power have been firmly rooted in scientific innovations: the automobile, the airplane, the telephone, the television, atomic power, the microprocessor. Perhaps the latest and most seductive iteration of that faith is the Internet.

## VIII. Conclusion and Discussion

Love is an abstract but familiar concept, it by definition defies iconic representation, and human beings express their love not only with language but also in non-verbal pictures. Comics can fully display the state of ideal love with its rich pictorial symbols and exaggerate expressions.

The conceptual metaphor of Kövecses' "Love is Fire" can be manifested or interpreted in the Chinese comic trip "*Old Master Q*" in a nonverbal way on the basis of different physiological effects, which implies the possibilities of the metaphor concerning the relationship between LOVE and FIRE is worldwide. It is not unusual that people have



common understanding of the conceptual metaphor “Love is Fire” in many countries. Cultural context plays a role in universality. However, those metaphors are varied due to cultural differences and within-culture variation. Most cultural variation in conceptual metaphor occurs at the specific level, whereas universality in metaphor can be found at the generic level. That is why the manifestations of love in English and Chinese have similarities and dissimilarities.

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