**ARTICLE**

# Exploring Conceptual Metaphors of Emotion, Time, and Identity in Pim Wangtechawat's *The Moon Represents My Heart*

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of conceptual metaphors related to emotion, time, and identity in meaning-making within Pim Wangtechawat's *The Moon Represents My Heart* by analyzing their application throughout three diasporic generations. Despite the proliferation of conceptual metaphor research within cognitive linguistics, there are no studies employing integrated multi-lens frameworks on contemporary Thai-authored English narratives, with even fewer investigating intergenerational transitions. To rectify this deficiency, we performed a two-stage thematic analysis of the novel's text, utilizing Lakoff's structural mappings, Kövecses's culturally grounded emotion model, and Semino's narrative-function approach. Three independent coders attained high Item-Objective Congruence, and the incorporation of theory triangulation with subject-matter specialists enhanced the credibility and reliability of our coding. This research indicates that first-generation voices utilize containment and inheritance metaphors to strengthen communal identity; second-generation characters transform these mappings into hybrid constructs that reflect filial tension; and third-generation protagonists employ dynamic, journey-oriented metaphors that balance heritage with self-expression. This study is limited by its examination of a single English-language text, lacking direct comparison to the Thai original or other Thai-authored works. Subsequent study ought to include bilingual corpora and cross-linguistic analyses, while also broadening the dataset to encompass various texts and genres, to enhance our comprehension of the functioning of metaphorical framing across languages, contexts, and developing diasporic identities.

*Keywords:* Conceptual Metaphor; Diasporic Literature; Cultural Identity; Emotion; Time; Generational Difference; Thai Diasporic Narrative; Cognitive Linguistics

# 1. Introduction

Although cross-cultural metaphor research has richly documented how core domains such as EMOTION, TIME, and IDENTITY are linguistically structured across diverse languages[1–3], no study to date has examined how a Thai diasporic author, writing in English, reconceptualizes these domains. Pim Wangtechawat's *The Moon Represents My Heart* presents a unique intersection of Thai cultural norms and Anglophone narrative conventions—yet its metaphorical patterns remain unexplored in the Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT) literature. By situating a Thai–English diasporic narrative within established CMT frameworks, this study addresses this gap in under-theorized cultural modulation in metaphor mapping. A

In the growing field of diasporic literature, metaphors serve not only as literary tools but also as cognitive instruments for expressing cultural dislocation, identity negotiation, and emotional heritage. *The Moon Represents My Heart*[4], the internationally acclaimed debut novel by Thai author Pim Wangtechawat, explores themes of time travel, intergenerational pain, and cultural identity through the experiences of the Wang family, whose secret ability to travel through time forces siblings Tommy and Eva to confront grief and loss across London and Hong Kong. Its global reception, including translations into multiple languages and upcoming screen adaptation by 21 Laps Entertainment, underscores the novel's cross-cultural appeal and makes it an ideal site for a metaphor-based cognitive analysis.

Despite a growing body of metaphor research in Thai literature[5–7], all prior studies have examined only Thai-language texts within a monolingual, domestic setting. No cognitive-linguistic analysis to date has systematically explored how Thai authors writing in English for a global audience deploy conceptual metaphors to negotiate cultural identity, emotion, and intergenerational memory. This lacuna obscures critical insights into how metaphoric framing is reconfigured when Thai cultural schemas migrate into Anglophone narrative conventions. By analyzing Pim Wangtechawat's *The Moon Represents My Heart*, an English-language diasporic novel, this study directly addresses that void, extending Conceptual Metaphor Theory[1,3,8] into bilingual and transnational Thai authorship and revealing how metaphor becomes a site of cultural translation and identity remapping, together with thematic analysis to code, analyze, and interpret the entire novel. Preliminary findings reveal two key theoretical contributions: emotion as contained honor, where EMOTION IS A CONTAINER metaphors (e.g., "grief sealed behind a courteous smile") are inflected by Thai norms of filial piety and social harmony, and time as cyclical memory, where TIME IS A CIRCLE metaphors (e.g., "the past circled back under the full moon") frame remembrance as a ritual loop rather than a linear path. To achieve these insights, this research employs a novel two-round coding procedure, combining open coding with cross-framework mapping (theory triangulation) and expert validation using Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), to ensure both cognitive credibility and methodological rigor.

## 1.1. Research Questions

1. What conceptual metaphors are used in Pim Wangtechawat's *The Moon Represents My Heart* to express themes of emotion, time, and identity?
2. How do conceptual metaphors in the novel reflect the negotiation of cultural identity and intergenerational difference?
3. How do first-, second-, and third-generation characters employ metaphors of identity, emotion, and time differently to construct their cultural selves?

## 1.2. Purpose of the Study

This research holds particular importance within the Thai academic and literary domains, representing one of the initial studies applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory[1,2,8] to a work of modern English-language fiction authored by a Thai writer. This study examines *The Moon Represents My Heart*, a novel intended to integrate Thai literature into prominent academic discourse both locally and internationally, focusing on Thai diasporic literature through the lens of cognitive linguistics.

This study enhances the diversity of conceptual metaphor research by emphasizing underrepresented cultural perspectives. It emphasizes the metaphorical construction of abstract concepts such as time, emotion, and identity in literature, offering new insights into how language mirrors and shapes human experience. This study integrates an approach to metaphor in discourse[3] with the core concepts on Conceptual Metaphor Theory[8] and emotion metaphor[1],

focusing on the narrative roles of metaphor and its effect on emotional experience. The study of metaphor in discourse[3] enhances the examination of how metaphor facilitates the readers' understanding of characters' psychological states and the thematic framework of the narrative. The novel utilizes a universal, culturally specific, and metaphorical framework, prompting Thai researchers and scholars in cognitive linguistics to examine the use of metaphor in literature and to improve understanding of the linguistic mechanisms influencing humanity.

This study expands metaphor identification beyond Western-centric collections by examining a Thai-authored, English-written novel. This research enhances Conceptual Metaphor Theory and cognitive linguistic analysis of literature, while also elevating the visibility of Thai authors and supporting the academic development of Thai scholarship within the international cognitive linguistics community.

## 1.3. Theoretical Framework

The initial phase of metaphorical identification in this study is thematic analysis and coding[9]. This methodology involves initial coding (open coding) by analyzing the data line by line or incident by incident from the entire text, followed by focused coding, grouping, theming, and constant comparison, complemented by memo writing to aid and improve the study.

### 1.3.1. Conceptual Metaphor and Mapping by Lakoff

Subsequently, the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)[8] uses common metaphors, such as LIFE IS A JOURNEY, STATES ARE LOCATION, TIME IS A FORCE, etc., to analyze the structuring of source and target domains into the patterns TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN or TARGET DOMAIN AS SOURCE DOMAIN. This paradigm categorizes conceptual metaphor into two types: conventional and novel. A conventional metaphor denotes a metaphor integrated into everyday cognitive processes, language, and experience, wherein an abstract concept is comprehended through its concrete counterpart. Significantly, it serves as a metaphor with systematic and universal application, enabling individuals to comprehend intricate emotional,

temporal, and identity-related phenomena.

The expression "She fell into depression" illustrates a conventional metaphor that perceives emotional states as physical locations. This example demonstrates how "falling into depression" uses spatial orientation to represent an abstract emotional state, envisioning depression as a physical trough into which one descends. This metaphor utilizes a common embodied experience (e.g., physical falling, downhill motion) to symbolize emotional deterioration. While not exclusive to literary writing, it likely manifests in everyday language usage. In literary works, it is deemed thematically significant since it enables speakers and authors to articulate emotional feelings distinctly and comprehensibly.

A novel metaphor is an unconventional metaphorical expression, not commonly used in regular language, often created by the author or speaker for specific communicative, poetic, or emotional purposes. This study primarily focuses on conventional metaphor, despite the creative language use and individual conceptualization revealed by novel metaphors. They are essential to a widely shared conceptual framework that enables readers to access and interpret abstract ideas. Conventional metaphor are intricately integrated into everyday language[2], making them cognitively effective instruments for both writers and readers. Their universality and cross-cultural prevalence enhance story understanding and emotional impact, particularly on issues like as emotion, identity, and time. In diasporic literature such as this work, conventional metaphors function as linguistic anchors that facilitate the communication of intergenerational experiences and cultural negotiations across different readers.

### 1.3.2. Emotion Metaphor by Kövecses

Kövecses extended this framework by emphasizing the emotional and cultural aspects of metaphor[1], discovering that the domain of emotion is among the most often examined target domains in conceptual metaphor theory. Emotions like anger, fear, love, pleasure, sadness, humiliation, and pride are often understood through force metaphors, which associate abstract emotional experiences with physical sensations and dynamics within the human body.

**Figure 1** depicts the schematic model of emotion as extended by Kövecses[1], encompassing the subsequent stages:

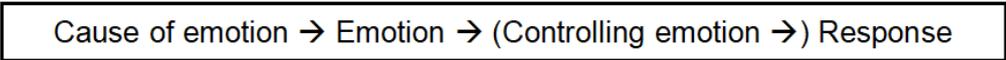> Cause of emotion → Emotion → (Controlling emotion →) Response

**Figure 1.** The schematic model of emotion proposed by Kövecses.

Kövecses posits that human comprehension of emotion is characterized by a folk theory wherein emotions are elicited by external or internal inputs, internally experienced, and subsequently manifested through behavioral reactions. The metaphorical framework illustrates this structure by depicting causes as forces exerting influence on an individual, eliciting emotional responses and shaping behaviors. This corresponds with Lakoff's underlying conceptual metaphor: CAUSES ARE FORCES[8].

This theoretical perspective will be employed to examine the expression of conventional emotion metaphors, especially those based on bodily force, in *The Moon Represents My Heart,* and their role in illustrating characters' emotional responses, psychological states, and intergenerational experiences.

In addition to the emotional metaphor, this theory also addresses the cultural diversity in the conceptualization, expression, and development of metaphors across different cultures[1]. This encompasses the layer of languages, cultural groups, individuals, and discourse communities. The selection of metaphors in language and literature varies according to cultural assumptions and values. The metaphor of emotion is especially attuned to cultural nuances. Specifically, although most languages utilize standard metaphors such as ANGER IS HEAT, other civilizations may employ distinct source domains or highlight alternative emotional frameworks. This theoretical framework of cultural variances is crucial to *The Moon Represents My Heart*, which examines diasporic identity and intergenerational memory within the British-Chinese family. The conceptual analogies in this work likely represent both cross-cultural and culturally particular interpretations of emotion, time, and identity.

### 1.3.3. Metaphor in Discourse by Semino

Metaphor in Discourse enhanced these structural models by emphasizing narrative function and character psychology in literary works[3]. This framework will be utilized for the metaphorical analysis in this study to demonstrate both Lakoff's[8] and Kövecses's[1] frameworks. Semino contended that conceptual metaphor enables authors to express the inexpressible experiences of characters' emotions and mental states[3]. Simultaneously, these metaphors may also serve to illustrate characters' identity and personality, as well as social and cultural values, depending upon the authors' application of metaphor, whether conventional, distinctive, or a combination of both in their literary compositions. This research suggests that the metaphorical pattern can be analyzed through the themes of emotion, identity, and time, as well as the negotiation of cultural identity over generations of characters. **Figure 2** depicts Semino's framework for interpretation.

SEMINO (2008) INTERPRETATION

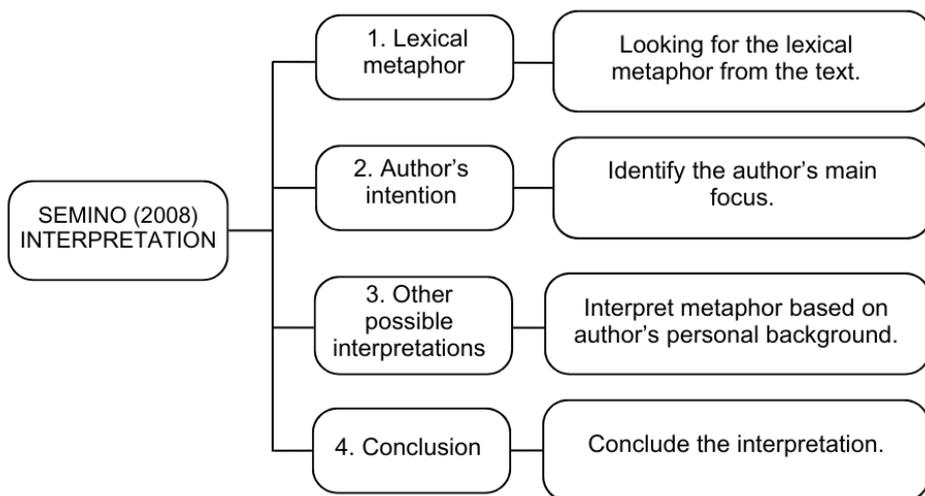| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Lexical metaphor | Looking for the lexical metaphor from the text. |
| 2. Author's intention | Identify the author's main focus. |
| 3. Other possible interpretations | Interpret metaphor based on author's personal background. |
| 4. Conclusion | Conclude the interpretation. |

**Figure 2.** Semino's[3] framework for interpretation.

Notably, this narrative-based model can potentially complement the structural focus of Lakoff[8] and the culturally grounded perspective of Kövecses[1], offering a multidimensional view of how metaphor operates within the novel.

### 1.4. Literature Review

### 1.4.1. Conceptual Metaphor in Literature

Lakoff's work[8] extends upon *Metaphor We Live By*[2], suggesting that conceptual metaphors develop cognitively from human thoughts and experiences appear in everyday language usage. Within cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor is regarded as a mechanism that frequently functions unconsciously, leading to automatic usage[1–3,8,10–12]. This paradigm delineates conceptual metaphor as the relationship between the source and target domains, wherein the abstract notion (target) is comprehended through the concrete idea (source)[1,2,8,11,12]. Thus, it can be articulated in the metaphorical framework as TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN or TARGET DOMAIN AS SOURCE DOMAIN through a technique known as "mapping"[1,2,8]. Lakoff contended that the mapping could not be separated from its evolution; instead, it is executed according to the hierarchical structure from the conventional—general—to the specific level (see **Figure 3**)[13].
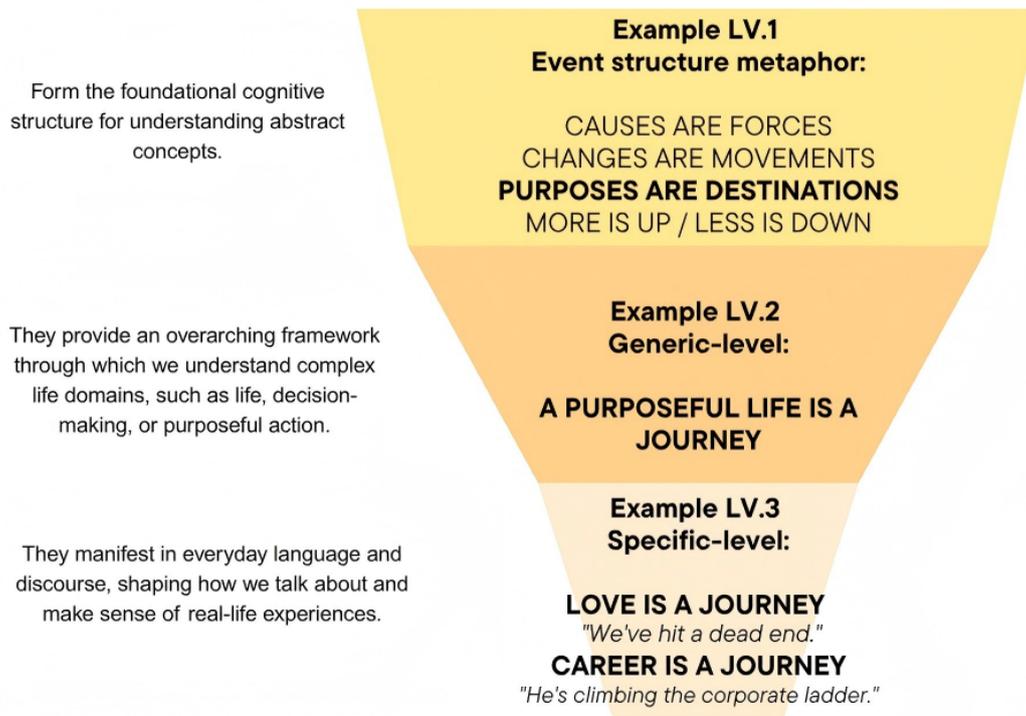


**Figure 3.** Hierarchical structure from Lakoff's[8] framework.

Nonetheless, while the majority of items in the target domain correspond with those in the source domain, several elements remain unmatched. Kövecses exemplified the metaphor THEORY IS BUILDING, indicating that the components of a theory do not entirely correspond to its constrution area (e.g., "This theory has a solid foundation, that argument supports the framework, and her ideas collapse under scrutiny")[11]. The inability to map the number of rooms in a building with a cellar or attic arises from the presence of distinct architectural elements such as attics, cellars, hallways, and staircases, which lack theoretical equivalents[11]. There is no common correlation between the attic and theories. The mapping of the cellar, as a metaphor, will lose clarity when it aligns with the theoretical structure.

This study employs the frameworks of Lakoff[8] and Kövecses[1], concentrating on the conventional metaphor including emotion, time, and identity metaphors. Both can be effectively utilized in this research, as Lakoff provides in-

sights into the systematic and cognitive approach, highlighting its universal use and comprehension[8], whilst Kövecses offers a framework for the cultural and contextual variety of metaphor[1]. Consequently, the use of both frameworks may facilitate data analysis to address the research questions and objectives of this study.

### 1.4.2. Metaphor and Identity

Moje and Luke articulated five fundamental metaphors of identity, derived from contemporary scholarship, which include identity as difference, sense of self/subjectivity, mind or awareness, narrative, and position[14]. Ultimately, these metaphors conceptualize identity not as a static characteristic but as a socially produced, discursively performed, and contextually relevant phenomenon[13,14]. This corresponds with the employment of metaphor in literature regarding how characters traverse their identities through evolving roles, relationships, and historical contexts. Likewise, Gvozdenović endorsed the perspective of identification as difference (group affiliation) regarding the integration of metaphor within cultural memory and emotional connection to the nation[15]. It was illustrated how metaphor encapsulates both personal identity and communal affiliation. Additionally, Emodi elaborated on this concept in their examination of African poetry, emphasizing how metaphor functions as a conduit between individual feeling and societal critique within the framework of political and cultural identity[15]. Nevertheless, numerous academics presented findings from a global perspective, yet they predominantly examined Western identity, resulting in diminished focus on the East. The studies consequently exhibit a deficiency in analytical and interpretative diversity in this domain.

These reviews affirmed that metaphor can construct, narrate, and negotiate identity in literature. Both conventional and new metaphors about emotion, place, or culturally distinctive expressions of belonging and history provide authors and readers the opportunity to view identity as fluid, relational, and influenced by social experience[14]. This study may utilize them as the theoretical framework to inform the investigation of the novel employed in this research.

### 1.4.3. Diaspora and Cultural Negotiation through Metaphor

The concept of diaspora, traditionally linked to displacement and dispersion, has transformed into a crucial analytical framework for evaluating cultural identity and metaphorical interpretation in literature. Hall's seminal theory of cultural identity and diaspora challenged the notion of fixed beginnings by articulating two divergent perspectives: identity as being (a collectively shared past) and identity as becoming (a dynamic, historical construct)[16]. Hall asserted that cultural identity is not static but an ongoing process of negotiation, formed through representation and influenced by power, memory, and history[16]. This theoretical perspective aligns with metaphor theory, particularly when metaphors facilitate the linkage between past and present, self and other, and nation and host location.

Diasporic authors often employ metaphor to convey intricate sensations of dislocation, hybridity, and identity rebuilding. Expanding upon Hall's dynamic perspective of identity as both "being" and "becoming"[16]. Galván argued that metaphors such as imaginary homelands, the Black Atlantic, and the journey function as conceptual instruments for articulating the diasporic experience, converting spatial and emotional dislocation into constructs of belonging and resistance[17]. These metaphors signify not only physical migration but also indicated cognitive and emotional alterations in self-identity and cultural affiliation[17].

Moreover, metaphor is an essential element in the negotiation of cultural identity within diasporic fiction. Bhandari examined Jhumpa Lahiri's immigrant characters through the lens of Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha's "third space" theory, highlighting how cultural negotiation engenders hybrid identities that contest the dichotomy between origin and assimilation[18]. Similarly, Alimir Mer demonstrated how characters in the writings of Gurnah and Aboulela utilize narrative and memory, often articulated symbolically, to portray a sense of belonging in international contexts[14]. These metaphors function as cognitive and emotional tools to reconcile cultural loss with reinvention.

Wang and Mohamed Ali employed metaphor analysis and cultural linguistics to investigate how diasporic individuals navigate identity in globalized contexts[19]. Their examination of Hwee Hwee Tan's Mammon Inc. elucidated how cultural schemas and metaphors embody intrinsic contradictions between tradition and modernity, as well as between East and West[19]. The results underscore the role of metaphor as a narrative device and a cultural instrument for identity negotiation, especially in situations of language dis-

placement, household responsibilities, and global capitalist influences[19]. The findings of Wang and Mohamed Ali[19] are likely to corroborate Bhandari's results[18], given their analogous worldwide contexts. Nevertheless, while these studies investigated metaphorical representations of cultural identity and diaspora, few have analyzed the functioning of these metaphors across generational differences within diasporic narratives, employing time travel as a literary device.

### 1.4.4. Conceptual Metaphor in Thai Literature

The conceptual metaphor has gradually emerged as an important framework in Thai literary analysis, especially for revealing the cognitive and cultural aspects inherent in narratives. Shepherd[7] utilized frameworks established by Lakoff and Johnson[8], Ahrens[20], and the Pragglejaz Group[21] to explore metaphors in *The Tale of Khun Chang Khun Phaen*, uncovering key themes including LIFE IS A JOURNEY, EMOTION IS HEAT, and PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS. These analogies embody Buddhist principles, hierarchical dynamics, and rooted Thai cultural conventions. Buakhao and Deocampo analyzed *Behind the Painting* by Sri Burapha and determined that metaphor was crucial in conveying feelings of rejection and generational conflict between tradition and Western modernism[5]. Rodsap and Siriwat analyzed metaphors of sexual intimacy in Thai yaoi fiction, uncovering metaphorical structures of power, dominance, and gender fluidity shaped by both Thai and global queer narratives[6].

Recent studies have progressed metaphor scholarship in Thai literature; nonetheless, they have predominantly focused on Thai-language texts and been examined within a monolingual, domestic context. As of now, no cognitive-linguistic research has comprehensively investigated how Thai authors composing in English for a worldwide audience employ conceptual metaphors to navigate cultural identity and emotional experiences across linguistic and cultural boundaries. This exclusion hinders our comprehension of how Thai diasporic voices utilize English-language metaphors to both maintain and alter conventional cultural frameworks. This study directly addresses the issue by evaluating Pim Wangtechawat's *The Moon Represents My Heart*, an English-language book that intertwines diasporic identity, emotion, and intergenerational memory[4]. Building upon the works of Lakoff[8], Kövecses[1], and Semino[3], this study expands Conceptual Metaphor Theory to encompass multilingual and transnational Thai authorship, thereby elucidating the metaphorical tactics employed to express Thai identity for a global audience.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Research Design

This research utilizes a qualitative design based in cognitive linguistics. The methodology primarily focuses on the textual and thematic study of conventional metaphor identification and interpretation in the novel *The Moon Represents My Heart* by Pim Wangtechawat[4]. This aims to find, categorize, and understand conceptual metaphors that embody the themes of emotion, time, and identity, along with intergenerational disparities and cultural identities across generations.

### 2.2. Sample and Data Collection

The primary source is the complete text of *The Moon Represents My Heart*, released in 2024. The novel is notable among English literature by Thai authors published internationally due to (a) its classification as contemporary fiction that adeptly portrays the experiences of Chinese families residing abroad, a significant demographic with established roots and cultural influence in Thailand; (b) its authorship by a Thai writer, international publication, translation into various languages, and impending adaptation into a Netflix series; and (c) its extensive use of metaphorical language, rendering it particularly suitable for metaphorical analysis. This research will examine the complete novel to find conceptual metaphors throughout different narrative phases: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and conclusion, thereby clarifying the development of metaphorical patterns associated with the themes of emotion, time, and identity.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

### 2.3.1. Research Question 1

What conceptual metaphors are used in Pim Wangtechawat's *The Moon Represents My Heart* to express themes of emotion, time, and identity?

The analysis method of this research question can be

seen in **Figure 4**. The initial procedure involves coding the complete texts by identifying themes and examining figurative language, symbols, and context in accordance with the thematic analysis framework. The researcher will manually code this data twice throughout the whole novel. The preliminary coding phase identifies superficial or overt metaphors (see **Supplementary Materials File 1–3**). This phase prioritizes comprehensiveness, guaranteeing that all possible metaphorical occurrences were documented. The second cycle aims to validate, refine, and reassess previous codes, reevaluating their theme groupings and verifying their conformity with existing conceptual metaphor frameworks. This iterative technique involves comparing codes across various story portions, resolving conflicts, and documenting coding decisions to improve methodological transparency. Substantially, manual coding is preferred over digital technologies as it facilitates triangulation across framework, mitigates prejudice, and enhances reflexivity. **Table 1** exemplifies the coding procedure.

> "*The Chinese calendar their father had hung up in the kitchen now hangs in the*
> *living room.*
> *She brings her own armchair and sets it next to the window where their mother's*
> *bookcase used to be.*
> *She does not let them sleep in beyond ten o'clock.*
> *She does their laundry and folds their clothes*
> *on the kitchen table instead of in*
> *their bedrooms.*
> *She does not cry.*
> *Eva wonders: How can you not cry when you've just lost your daughter?*
> *How can you not howl and tear your hair out like a madwoman?*
> *Isn't that what all of us are meant to do?*
> *She doesn't know.*
> *But Ah-ma cooks for them every day without fail.*
> *Ah-ma says, 'I'm here for both of you if you need me, but things are going to*
> *be very different around here.'*
> *Ah-ma says, 'This is all very unfortunate, but other people have had it worse.'*
> *Ah-ma says, 'Look around. You still have a good life.'*
> *Ah-ma says, 'You can't stay in the house all day.'*
> *Ah-ma says, 'You can't not talk to anyone all day?'*
> *Ah-ma says, 'It will get better with time.'*
> *Ah-ma says, 'You will learn to live and get on with it.'*
> *Ah-ma says, 'You will learn to get on with it.'*
> *Ah-ma says, 'You will get on with it.'*
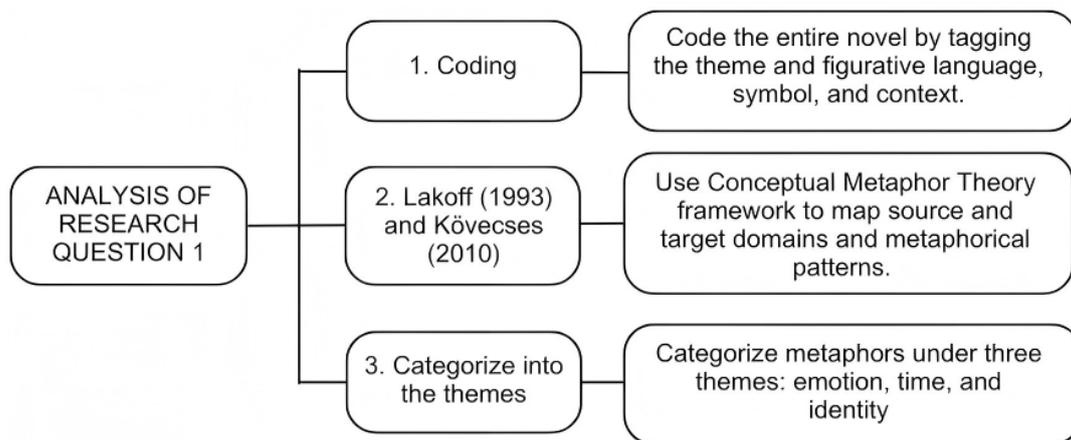> *Ah-ma says, 'We all will.' "*

[4]



**Figure 4.** Analysis methods for research question 1.

**Table 1.** Coding.

| Highlighted Sentence | Themes | Figurative Language | Symbol | Context |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The Chinese calendar their father had hung up in the kitchen now hangs in the living room. | Memory/Cultural continuity/Identity | None (literal but symbolic) | Chinese calendar | Suggests continuity and preservation of cultural identity even as the family dynamic shifts. |
| She brings her own armchair and sets it next to the window where their mother's bookcase used to be. | Change/Displacement | None (symbolic juxtaposition) | Armchair/Window/Bookcase | Represents the physical and emotional replacement of one generation by another; absence of the mother is quietly noted. |
| She does not let them sleep in beyond ten o'clock. | Discipline/Control | None | None | Shows Ah-ma's assertion of order and control during emotional upheaval. |
| She does their laundry and folds their clothes on the kitchen table instead of in their bedrooms. | Domestic restructuring/Order vs. grief | None | Kitchen table | Represents a new way of managing the household—ritual replaces intimacy. |
| She does not cry. | Suppressed grief/Strength | None | None | Highlights stoicism or cultural conditioning in the face of loss. |
| Eva wonders: How can you not cry when you've just lost your daughter?... | Emotional expectation/Cultural contrast | Hyperbole: "Howl and tear your hair out" | None | Eva expresses a disconnect between what grief "should" look like and Ah-ma's behavior—cultural or generational gap. |
| Ah-ma cooks for them every day without fail. | Resilience/Caregiving | None | Cooking | Acts of nourishment replace emotional expression; caregiving as love. |
| Ah-ma says, 'I'm here for both of you if you need me...' (and following repeated sayings) | Resilience/Cultural stoicism/Survival | Anaphora (repetition of "Ah-ma says…") | None | The repetition of pragmatic, emotionally restrained advice reflects a culturally conditioned response to grief—control over vulnerability. |
| 'You will learn to live and get on with it.' | Cultural stoicism/Acceptance | Gradation/Repetition (escalating phrase simplicity) | None | The diminishing repetition from "learn to live" to "get on with it" shows emotional distancing and survival instinct. |

Next, Lakoff's[8] and Kövecses's[1] framework will be used to identify the conceptual metaphors as well as to form them into the pattern TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN or TARGET DOMAIN AS SOURCE DOMAIN. For example:

— *"She does not cry"* refers to EMOTION IS A CONFINED SPACE.

　○ In this metaphor, emotion is conceptualized as something enclosed or contained, like water in a vessel. The fact that "she does not cry" implies that emotional energy is present but not allowed to escape. The absence of tears reflects a culturally or personally enforced boundary.

— *"Eva wonders: How can you not cry when you've just lost your daughter? ..."* refers to GRIEF IS MADNESS.

　○ Eva's rhetorical question reflects her expectation that deep grief should manifest as physical and emotional outbursts (e.g., "howl and tear your hair out like a madwoman"). In this case, grief is not only overwhelming but irrational, likened to a psychological break or madness. The use of extreme imagery supports the mapping: when grief is at its peak, it behaves like a mental disorder, meaning that it can be unpredictable, destructive, and uncontrollable.

— *"The Chinese calendar their father had hung up in the kitchen now hangs in the living room"* refers to HOME IS MEMORY SPACE.

　○ The Chinese calendar is more than decoration because it is a symbol of cultural heritage and memory. Moving the calendar from the kitchen (a daily-use space) to the living room (a central, possibly more formal space) suggests a shift in how memory and tradition are being positioned and preserved in the family's emotional landscape. Thus, this

metaphor positions the home as a repository of shared history, where even mundane objects become markers of familial identity and continuity.

Lastly, the final procedure to answer Research Question 1 is to categorize the conceptual metaphors into the themes of emotion, identity, or time. Regarding the previous step, EMOTION IS A CONFINED SPACE and GRIEF IS MADNESS are classified under the emotion theme, while HOME IS MEMORY SPACE can be part of an identity theme.

## 2.3.2. Research Question 2

How do conceptual metaphors in the novel reflect the negotiation of cultural identity across generations?

For this question which can be seen in **Figure 5**, the first procedure is the continuation from the first question. In other words, the conceptual metaphors under three themes in Research Question 1 will be isolated in the aspect of family relationships, heritage, belonging, or cultural displacement.

For instance, *"The Chinese calendar their father had hung up in the kitchen now hangs in the living room"* - HOME IS MEMORY SPACE can also be grouped under cultural heritage.

Subsequently, Semino's [3] framework will be utilized for interpretation. The relocation of the calendar from the kitchen to the living room is more than a mere domestic alteration; it represents a symbolic reorientation of memory and cultural heritage within the household. This suggests that the father's memory and the values he represented are being relocated to a more prominent and visible position within the family's emotional and spatial context. This gesture may signify the characters' effort to maintain continuity despite emotional upheaval, while also indicating a transformation in generational roles. Through this gesture, the author quietly illustrates emotional conflict—between sorrow and fortitude—and an unspoken negotiation between generational identity and cultural fusion.
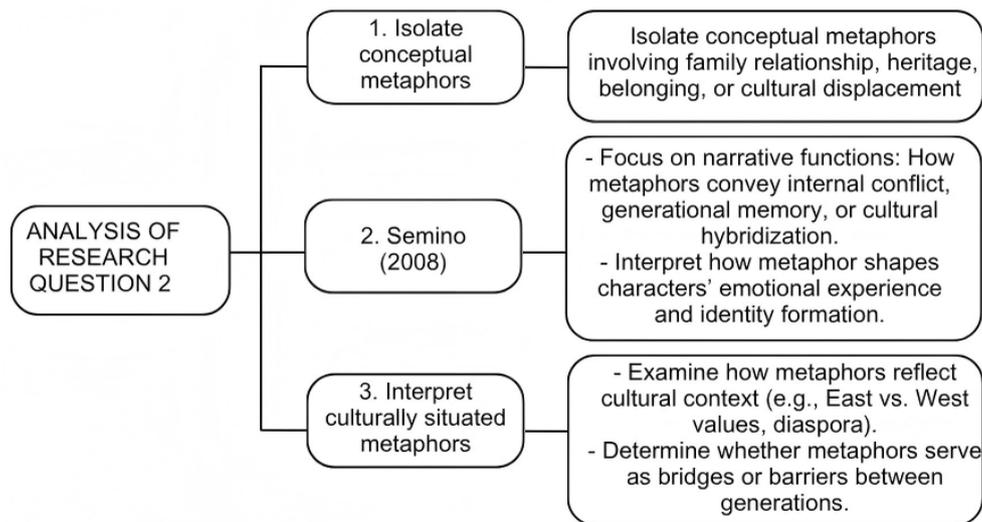


**Figure 5.** Analysis methods for research question 2.

Upon analyzing the narrative function, the data can be interpreted using culturally contextualized metaphors. The Chinese calendar, emblematic of ethnic and familial heritage, serves as a conduit between past and present, and its positioning within the household illustrates the recontextualization of cultural symbols during times of emotional turmoil. This moment influences the characters' emotional experiences by connecting home routines with inherited memories, demonstrating that identity formation is profoundly linked to spatial and cultural symbols.

This conceptual metaphor and its surroundings illustrate a dynamic interaction between cultural inheritance and individual agency, as characters throughout generations reinterpret traditional norms in response to personal loss, displacement, and memory. The novel employs metaphor to express internal emotions and to depict the shifting, often

opposing, constructs of cultural identity between elders and younger members of a diasporic family.

## 2.3.3. Research Question 3

How do first-, second-, and third-generation characters employ metaphors of identity, emotion, and time differently to construct their cultural selves?

To demonstrate, the analysis methods, which demonstrate in **Figure 6**, can be shown as follows.

**Text sample:**

"*The Chinese calendar their father had hung up in the kitchen now hangs in the living room.*
*She brings her own armchair and sets it next to the window where their mother's bookcase used to be.*
*She does not let them sleep in beyond ten o'clock.*
*She does their laundry and folds their clothes on the kitchen table instead of in their bedrooms.*
*She does not cry.*
*Eva wonders: How can you not cry when you've just lost your daughter?*
*How can you not howl and tear your hair out like a madwoman?*
*Isn't that what all of us are meant to do?*
*She doesn't know.*
*But Ah-ma cooks for them every day without fail.*
*Ah-ma says, 'I'm here for both of you if you need me, but things are going to be very different around here.'*
*Ah-ma says, 'This is all very unfortunate, but other people have had it worse.'*
*Ah-ma says, 'Look around. You still have a good life.'*
*Ah-ma says, 'You can't stay in the house all day.'*
*Ah-ma says, 'You can't not talk to anyone all day?'*
*Ah-ma says, 'It will get better with time.'*
*Ah-ma says, 'You will learn to live and get on with it.'*
*Ah-ma says, 'You will learn to get on with it.'*
*Ah-ma says, 'You will get on with it.'*
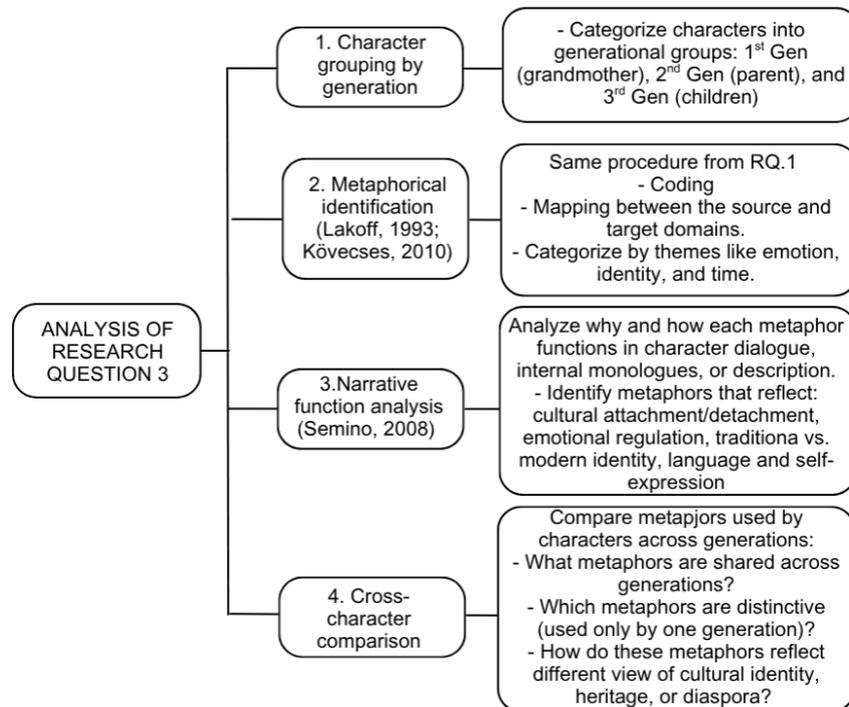*Ah-ma says, 'We all will.'* "

[4]



**Figure 6.** Analysis method of research question 3.

**Ah-ma (1st generation):**

**Metaphor**: EMOTION IS A CONFINED SPACE

- Emotion is something to suppress, manage, and keep contained.
- Reflects traditional cultural values (emotional restraint, stoicism).
- Supports CULTURAL IDENTITY AS DUTY.

**Eva (3rd generation):**

**Metaphor:** GRIEF IS MADNESS

- Uses a metaphor that links grief with emotional disruption or loss of control.
- Reflects a more individualistic, expressive approach to emotion.
- Reflects CULTURAL IDENTITY AS SELF-EXPRESSION.

**Interpretation:** The contrast in metaphors reveals a generational shift in how cultural identity and emotion are experienced and expressed. Eva's generation aligns with a Westernized, therapeutic model, while Ah-ma represents traditional Chinese values of resilience.

## 2.4. Credibility and Reliability

Theory triangulation was used to test whether our metaphor identifications hold up across three established lenses (Lakoff & Johnson's conventional metaphor mappings; Kövecses's emotion-specific categories; Semino's narrative-function labels). Of the 36 metaphor instances sampled, 32 converged, meaning at least two frameworks assigned the same label, yielding an overall convergence rate of 88.9% (see **Supplementary Materials File 5**). This rate substantially exceeds the 75–80% benchmark commonly cited for demonstrating strong credibility in qualitative research.

To ensure the reliability of this metaphor analysis, the researcher will utilize methodological triangulation and expert validation using the Index of Item–Objective Congruence (IOC). Initially, the conceptual metaphors found within the three thematic domains (emotion, time, and identity) will be cross-referenced with recognized frameworks in Cognitive Metaphor Theory (e.g., Lakoff and Johnson[2]; Kövecses[1]). Subsequently, three impartial authorities in English language and literature will act as inter-raters: each will evaluate the proposed metaphor examples and determine whether each item accurately reflects its intended conceptual category.

IOC scores will be determined for each metaphor item as the ratio of consensus among the three raters (i.e., the number of raters endorsing the item divided by three).

A minimum inclusion criterion of 0.5 was established, consistent with standards in applied linguistics and educational research, wherein an IOC score ≥ 0.5 signifies that at least two out of three raters concur on the classification of an item, surpassing random agreement and guaranteeing acceptable content validity. This threshold reconciles empirical rigor with the interpretative aspects of literary metaphor analysis, where cultural nuances and figurative complexities may produce variability among raters. The expert validation method produced an overall IOC mean of 0.65, signifying acceptable inter-rater reliability (see **Supplementary Materials File 4**).

## 2.5. Ethical Consideration

This study involves textual and thematic analysis of a published literary work and does not involve human subjects or personal data. Ethical standards will be upheld through proper citation and respect for intellectual property maintaining the integrity of Wangtechawat's cultural expressions. Cultural sensitivity was maintained by anchoring metaphor interpretations within pertinent Thai and Chinese cultural contexts, eschewing recontextualization that might compromise cultural specificity, preserving original phrasing while elucidating culturally specific terminology, and engaging in reflexivity through reflective notes and a documented audit trail of coding decisions.

# 3. Results

## 3.1. Findings of Research Question 1

In *The Moon Represents My Heart,* conceptual metaphors actively negotiate the complexities inherent in diaspora existence, intergenerational connections, and personal growth, transcending mere descriptions of the characters' experiences of identity, emotion, and time (see **Supplementary Materials File 6**). By linking abstract domains with concrete source domains, these metaphors evolve into dynamic tools through which characters redefine power, belonging, emotional limits, and temporal shifts.

The identity metaphors found in the complete novel total 100 conceptual metaphors, as shown in **Table 2**.

**Table 2.** Frequency and list of identity metaphors.

| Conceptual Metaphor | Freq. | Conceptual Metaphor | Freq. | Conceptual Metaphor | Freq. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| IDENTITY IS SENSE OF BELONGING | 5 | IDENTITY IS HIERARCHY | 3 | IDENTITY IS MIRRORED DIFFERENCE | 1 |
| IDENTITY IS PERFORMANCE | 2 | CULTURAL IDENTITY IS A DISPLAYED ARTIFACT | 2 | IDENTITY IS A ROLE ASSIGNED BY SOCIAL STRUCTURE | 1 |
| IDENTITY IS RESEMBLANCE | 1 | IDENTITY IS APPEARANCE AND ACTION | 1 | IDENTITY IS LIFE GIVER | 1 |
| PARENTAL IDENTITY IS AUTHORITY AND CONTROL | 16 | IDENTITY IS DESTINY | 1 | THE CHILD IS REFLECTION OF THE SELF | 1 |
| IDENTITY IS FLUID | 3 | IDENTITY IS A CONTAINER | 2 | IDENTITY IS A MASK | 1 |
| IDENTITY IS RECOGNITION/PERCEPTION | 13 | CULTURAL IDENTITY IS FOOD | 2 | IDENTITY IS EMOTIONAL CONTAINMENT | 1 |
| LANGUAGE IS CULTURAL IDENTITY | 1 | CHARACTER IS MOTION | 2 | IDENTITY IS AN IMAGINED INTERIOR WORLD | 1 |
| IDENTITY IS INHERITANCE | 2 | IDENTITY IS EXISTENCE | 1 | IDENTITYIS A PATH | 1 |
| IDENTITY IS PERSONAL PLACE IN TIME | 2 | IDENTITY IS A SOCIAL ROLE | 1 | IDENTITY IS MIRRORED SELF | 1 |
| IDENTITY IS INDIVIDUALITY | 2 | IDENTITY IS RELATIONAL CARE | 1 | IDENTITY IS STYLE | 1 |
| IDENTITY IS AN OBJECT | 1 | IDENTITY IS EXPECTATION | 1 | IDENTITY IS TIME TRAVEL | 1 |
| IDENTITY IS OTHERNESS | 2 | IDENTITY IS PROTECTED INNER FAITH | 1 | IDENTITY IS ORIGIN | 2 |
| IDENTITY IS FULFILLING A FAMILY ROLE | 1 | IDENTITY IS SPIRITUAL CONNECTION | 1 | IDENTITY IS A PAST | 1 |
| IDENTITY IS ASSERTIVE VOICE | 1 | BELONGINGS ARE THE SELF | 1 | IDENTITY IS STAYING TRUE TO THE SELF | 3 |
| IDENTITY IS RITUALIZED GIVING | 1 | IDENTITY IS BEING AN ADULT | 1 | IDENTITY IS A FEAR BECOMING | 1 |
| IDENTITY IS DUTIFUL ENDURANCE | 1 | IDENTITY IS SILENT CARE | 1 | IDENTITY IS IDEAL WOMAN | 1 |
| IDENTITY IS RESILENCE | 1 | IDENTITY IS INTERGENERATIONAL GUIDANCE | 1 | IDENTITY IS A LOST | 1 |
| IDENTITY IS ROOTED PLACE | 1 | IDENTITY IS ACCOUNTABILITY | 1 | | |

Parental identity metaphors depict authority as control, navigating the equilibrium between care and dominance in Asian family dynamics. When Tommy remembers his father towering over him—"Concentrate! What makes it so challenging…?"—the concept (PARENTAL) IDENTITY IS AUTHORITY AND CONTROL positions compliance as a cultural obligation. Similarly, IDENTITY IS RECOGNITION summarizes how individuals confirm or obscure their identity: Christelle's "quirks," from her use of chopsticks to her lack of social media presence, function as negotiated markers of her introverted disposition. Ultimately, diasporic identity is expressed through IDENTITY IS SENSE OF BELONGING, as Joshua's adaptation to London's "grey skies" evolves from an outsider's perspective to a sense of familiarity, negotiating self-visibility within a new cultural environment.

Metaphors of emotion facilitate how characters confront grief, wrath, and love with a total of 99 conceptual metaphors (see **Table 3**).

In Ah-ma's repeated phrase, "I cannot believe... this is real," emotion emerges as a powerful force—EMOTION IS A FORCE—confronting denial as a concrete assault on comprehension. Conversely, EMOTION IS AN OBJECT illustrates Tommy's confusing emotions as a tangible, movable item, expressing indescribable sentiments through tactile imagery. Movement metaphors, SADNESS IS MOTION and GRIEF IS MOVEMENT, demonstrate restlessness or the involuntary expression of sorrow, highlighting the discord between external tranquility and inward turmoil.

Time metaphors play a vital role in reconciling the past, present, and future within individuals' lives with a total of 38 metaphors (see **Table 4**). However, there are some repetitions of the metaphors themselves.

**Table 3.** Frequency and list of emotion metaphors.

| Conceptual Metaphor | Freq. | Conceptual Metaphor | Freq. | Conceptual Metaphor | Freq. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ANNOYING IS A FORCE | 1 | BETRAYAL IS FORCE | 1 | ANXIOUS IS BEING CHASED | 1 |
| ANGER IS A FORCE | 7 | COPING WITH LOSS IS A MOVEMENT | 1 | ANXIOUS IS A FORCE | 1 |
| HAPPY IS UP | 1 | ANGER IS A MOVEMENT | 1 | LOVE IS A FORCE | 2 |
| HAPPINESS IS ENERGY | 1 | DEFIANCE IS CURRENCY | 1 | CURIOSITY IS A JIGSAW PUZZLE | 1 |
| SADNESS IS MOTION/MOVEMENT | 2 | EMOTIONAL PAIN IS PHYSICAL INVASION | 1 | FEAR IS A MOVEMENT | 1 |
| EMOTION IS A FORCE | 7 | BETRAYAL IS A TASTE | 1 | CURIOSITY IS A FORCE | 2 |
| EMOTION IS A RESOURCE TO BE MANAGED | 1 | SATISFYING IS A FORCE | 1 | SURPRISE IS A FORCE | 1 |
| LOVE IS NOURISHMENT | 2 | EMOTION IS MEANINGLESS PERFORMANCE | 1 | EMPTINESS IS MOTION | 1 |
| GRIEF IS DEATH | 1 | HEALING IS STILLNESS | 1 | EMOTION IS A MOVEMENT | 2 |
| EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE IS SHARED BURDEN | 1 | EMOTION IS A BURDEN | 1 | LOVE IS PROXIMITY | 1 |
| EMOTIONAL STATE IS A (CONFINED) SPACE | 2 | SHAME IS EXPOSURE | 1 | PAIN IS A FORCE | 1 |
| NERVOUS IS A FORCE | 1 | RELIEF IS TASTE | 1 | PANIC IS A FORCE | 1 |
| GRIEF IS A MOVEMENT | 2 | PLEASURE IS AN OBJECT | 1 | GUILT IS A FORCE | 1 |
| OBSESSION IS A FORCE | 1 | RELIEF IS AN OBJECT | 2 | FEAR IS A FORCE | 2 |
| LONELY IS A MOVEMENT | 1 | EMOTION IS TEMPERATURE | 1 | HAPPINESS IS A CONTAINER | 1 |
| SURPRISE IS AN OBJECT | 1 | SORROW IS A MOVABLE OBJECT | 1 | GRIEF IS AN ORGANISM | 1 |
| EMOTION IS A (COLORED) OBJECT | 4 | LOVE IS AN OBJECT | 2 | SADNESS/GRIEF IS A FORCE | 3 |
| NUMBNESS IS A CONTAINER | 1 | FALLING IN LOVE IS AN OBJECT | 1 | LOVE IS A JOURNEY | 1 |
| LOVE IS AN EXCHANGABLE OBJECT | 1 | UNCERTAINTY IS A FORCE | 1 | LOVE IS ENDURANCE | 1 |
| EMOTIONAL STRENGTH IS UPRIGHTNESS | 1 | HAPPINESS IS AN OBJECT | 1 | SHAME IS HEAT | 1 |
| ANNOYING IS A CONTAINER | 1 | SADNESS/GRIEF IS AN OBJECT | 3 | FRUSTRATION IS A FORCE | 1 |
| SHAME IS A HIDDEN OBJECT | 1 | EMOTIONAL STATE IS LOCATION | 1 | DESPARATE IS A FORCE | 1 |
| SADNESS IS UNCONSCIOUSNESS | 1 | OVERCOMING GRIEF IS A JOURNEY | 1 | EMOTION IS CONTAINED | 1 |
| SHAME IS A FORCE | 1 | | | | |

**Table 4.** Frequency and list of time metaphors.

| Conceptual Metaphor | Freq. | Conceptual Metaphor | Freq. | Conceptual Metaphor | Freq. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TIME TRAVEL IS A MOVEMENT/JOURNEY | 13 | TIME IS MOTION ALONG THE PATH | 1 | TIME IS A FORCE | 3 |
| TIME IS A MOVABLE OBJECT | 1 | EVENTS ARE MOVEMENT OF TIME | 1 | THE FUTURE IS AHEAD | 3 |
| TIME IS A JOURNEY | 3 | TIME IS A RESOURCE | 1 | TIME TRAVEL IS A CYCLE | 1 |
| TIME IS LINE | 3 | TIME IS A FLEXIBLE OBJECT | 1 | TIME IS A CYCLE | 1 |
| TIME IS A FLOW | 3 | TIME IS A MOVEMENT | 1 | PAST IS BEHIND | 2 |

TIME TRAVEL IS A JOURNEY stages the twins' ritual—hand-holding, closed eyes, temporal transit—as a negotiated passage across moments. THE FUTURE IS AHEAD uses the repeated phrase "You will see me again…" to negotiate anticipation and the irrevocability of change, marking each stage of departure as a stepping-stone into an unknown life. Simultaneously, TIME IS A FLOW and TIME IS A LINE address urgency and linear progression: the river-like "running out" of time constrains characters to escalating dread, while the unidirectional passage of months into years solidifies the impossibility of return.

*The Moon Represents My Heart* utilizes interconnected metaphorical frameworks, employing language as a means for negotiation between authority and submission, visibility and concealment, stasis and mobility, as well as loss and rejuvenation. Metaphors function as reflections of reality and as dynamic tools that enable characters and readers to reinvent identities, emotional landscapes, and chronological trajectories.

## 3.2. Findings of Research Question 2

This study demonstrates that conceptual metaphors in Wangtechawat's work serve not merely as additional elements in the narrative, but as dynamic settings where individuals perpetually negotiate their identities with respect to family, culture, and generational context. These findings emphasize the role of metaphors as instruments of identity construction across three dimensions: psychological positioning (internal conflict), cultural transmission (generational memory), and normative grounding (stable markers), with hybridization acting as a crucial bridging strategy, illustrating how these processes evolve from the first to the second generation.

First-generation characters predominantly depend on consistent identification indicators—metaphors of authority and control ("You are coming home…no one to take care of me")[4], hierarchy ("Men lead; women follow")[4], and fulfilling a family role ("Who will take care of Maa-maa?")[4]. These examples establish belonging by portraying identity as an inherited obligation or a permanent location ("home as fortress") . Conversely, second-generation speakers reinterpret these domains using dynamic metaphors: "Space holds my true self"[4] shifts the concept of a container from restrictive to emancipatory. This transition from "anchored"

to "adaptive" highlights a generational shift: elders employ metaphor to maintain cultural norms, while children utilize it to redefine them.

The generational memory function designates goods and rituals as vessels of identity. The Jade Buddha evolves from a communal artifact ("She never left home without it")[4] to a concealed talisman ("hidden underneath his shirt")[4], signifying a move from collective ownership to individual possession. Similarly, "Ancestor as compass"[4] shifts to "Time travel to their faces"[4], as grandchildren progress from passively preserving inherited narratives to actively engaging with them. Consequently, memory metaphors evolve into dynamic landscapes rather than overlooked storage units.

Cultural hybridization metaphors function as conduits, amalgamating the values of homeland and host land into cohesive self-perceptions. They contrast sharply with barrier metaphors of otherness ("Your accent…makes me think maybe not")[4] or objectification ("An exotic species… a symbol")[4], which illustrate the barriers that success or foreignness creates between the self and society. Consequently, metaphorical families illustrate the conflicting forces of integration and alienation in diasporic existence.

Ultimately, the metaphors of internal conflict, "IDENTITY IS A MASK" and "IDENTITY IS A PATH" (script vs. unexplored)[4], illuminate the psychological rifts that underpin generational tensions. **Table 5** illustrates the intergenerational differences in metaphor use.

First-generation speakers demonstrate a cohesive purpose and identity, but second-generation characters frequently articulate the tension between inherited obligations and personal aspirations, converting stable identifiers into points of dispute.

Collectively, these patterns illustrate that conceptual metaphors in the novel serve as instruments of negotiation, simultaneously affirming, challenging, and restructuring the connections that link individuals to family, tradition, and locale. They exemplify Lakoff's[8] assertion that metaphoric framing influences cognition and behavior and validate Semino's[3] argument that narrative metaphors elucidate psychological processes. This comprehensive examination demonstrates the malleability of cultural identity: even the most venerable metaphors can be reappropriated, recontextualized, or revitalized by new generations striving to respect tradition while establishing their own trajectories.

**Table 5.** The intergenerational differences in metaphor use.

| Metaphor Family | Gen 1 – Key Quotes | Gen 2 – Key Quotes | Key Differences |
|---|---|---|---|
| **PARENTAL IDENTITY IS AUTHORITY AND CONTROL** | Joshua: 'Focus! Why is it so hard for you to get this? Focus! You're not listening!' [4], p. 36 | Tommy: And Tommy shakes with fear because that's what he has always done. [4], p. 36 | Gen 1 focuses on the fixed and aggressive duty and is demanding from his son. Gen 2, the son, always obeys his father with fear. |
| | Carol: You are coming home. Your father is gone. There is no one to take care of me and your grandmother. … Have you no regard for your mother? [4], p. 249 | Lily: Mum, Dad left me the Kennington House. And Joshua and I are starting a family of our own. You can't ask this of me. [4], p. 249 | Gen 1 has completed authority and control over her daughter while Gen 2 is refusing/disobeying what Gen 1 has told her what to do. |
| | The primary distinction between Generation 1 and Generation 2 is in Generation 1's emphasis on an unwavering command, wherein authority is manifested as an indisputable right to control life choices. Generation 2 emphasizes self-determination as a means of resistance or renegotiation. | | |
| **IDENTITY IS INHERITANCE** | Ah-ma: 'Thomas. That is your name, and that is what I'll call you. … 'Thomas is a perfectly good name. It was your grandfather's middle name. My husband's. [4], p. 38 | Tommy: I prefer Tommy. | Gen 1is highlighting inherited legacy but Gen 2 prefers personal autonomy. |
| | A direct comparison between Generation 1 and Generation 2 reveals that Generation 1 possesses a fixed perspective on the name inherited from their ancestor. Generation 2 emphasizes self-determination in their choices and life trajectories. It emphasizes independence rather than depending on others' decisions. | | |
| **IDENTITY IS FULFILLING A FAMILY ROLE** | Father: "Who will take care of your maa-maa?… When we're driven out of our homes?" [4], p. 79 | Joshua (unspoken): longs to say "You" but remains silent—imagines demolition, feels torn between duty and desire [4], p. 79–80 | Gen 1 (duty) enacts identity as unquestioned filial obligation; Gen 2 (autonomy) experiences that same obligation as a burden on self-growth. |
| | A direct comparison between Generation 1 and Generation 2 reveals that Generation 1 aligns with the understanding of PARENTAL IDENTITY IS AUTHORITY AND CONTROL, as it emphasizes the role in maintaining family welfare. Generation 2 emphasizes personal development in selecting their life trajectories, even if it entails deviating from traditional Chinese familial norms. | | |
| **IDENTITY IS RELATIONAL CARE** | Mother rings constantly: "Are you eating enough? When will we see you again? Are you paying attention…?" [4], p. 110 | Joshua barely calls back—only once to frail Maa-maa; no calls to father or sister. | Gen 1 (active care) enacts love through ritualized checking-in; Gen 2 (passive care) experiences distance and hesitates to reciprocate care. |
| | A direct comparison between Generation 1 and Generation 2 reveals that Generation 1, particularly within Chinese culture, tends to pose questions to their children as a means of implicitly expressing their affection. Generation 2 may prioritize separating themselves over maintaining contact with their parents. Gen 2 emphasizes identification in conjunction with selective emotional engagement. | | |
| **IDENTITY IS PROTECTED INNER FAITH** | Maa-maa wore the jade Buddha openly around her neck each morning as a public emblem of her faith ("She never left home without it.") | Joshua attaches it under his shirt, Joshua attaches it under his shirt, hidden close to his heart ("…attach a string…hidden underneath his shirt." [4], p. 114 | Gen 1 treats the jade Buddha as a communal, openly displayed symbol of ancestral protection (public). Gen 2 internalizes that faith as a deeply personal, hidden safeguard (private). |
| | A direct comparison between Generation 1 and Generation 2 reveals that Generation 1, particularly the seniors, depends on spiritual beliefs conveyed through symbols. Generation 2 secretly conceals such symbols, despite sharing the same belief. | | |
| **IDENTITY IS PERCEPTION** | Maa-maa retells her son's childhood: "When your father was young…" [4], p. 205, framing him through loving memory. | Eva hears that story and re-imagines her father: from "stern, unshakable" to "perfect in almost every way." | Gen 1 (recollection) preserves a past self through memory; Gen 2 (re-creation) actively projects that memory into a new, idealized identity. |
| | A direct comparison between Generation 1 and Generation 2: Generation 1 sustains their legacy by narratives conveyed to youngsters on their history. Gen 2 pertains to the reconstruction of memories conveyed by their parents to comprehend their identity. | | |
| **IDENTITY IS ACCOUNTABILITY** | Joshua (Gen 1): "Speak up, Tommy… explain," demanding a verbal justification for every misstep. [4], p. 315 | Tommy (Gen 2): Hesitates, swallows, can't meet his father's standard in which his identity becomes one of anxiety and shame. | Gen 1 (duty) treats accountability as rightful assertion of authority; Gen 2 (distress) experiences it as oppressive, undermining confidence. |
| | A direct comparison between Generation 1 and Generation 2: Generation 1 employs it as a means of maintaining authority through verbal expression as part of their identity presentation. Generation 2 sees a reduction in self-esteem due to the accountability of adhering to prescribed directives. | | |

## 3.3. Findings of Research Question 3

Over the three generations, a distinct trajectory emerges in the utilization of metaphorical frameworks pertaining to identity, emotion, and time to formulate and reformulate cultural identities (see **Table 6**).

First-generation individuals such as Ah-ma Carol and Maa-ma employ enduring, memory-rich metaphors to uphold tradition and responsibility. Identity is shown as a legacy and dominion—the grandfather's name is bequeathed, the need to come home and attend to the elders. Emotion is expressed through physical care (e.g., "love is nourishment," feeding rituals) or regulated mourning (e.g., suppressed tears, grief redirected into cooking), but explicit metaphors of time are predominantly absent—time instead progresses through recurring rituals and narratives that subtly connect the past and present.

Second-generation protagonists such as Joshua and Lily inhabit a complex transitional realm, intertwining metaphors of memory preservation and internal strife. Joshua's hidden Jade Buddha and his demand that Tommy "articulate...clarify" the connection between personal belief and societal obligation, along with his gaz, which "causes Eva to blush," outline an emotional dynamic that both protects and isolates. Time is intensely perceived through explosive moments ("time bomb…Boom"), ephemeral memories, and deliberate revisits to childhood rooftops—metaphors that depict the conflict between familial obligation and personal autonomy.

Third-generation speakers, Tommy and Eva, utilize fluid, hybrid metaphors to establish their self-definition. Identity manifests as a confident expression and a welcoming refuge ("space embodies my authentic self"), emotions are conveyed through color and motion (anger "swimming" in the eyes; grief represented in subdued hues), and time oscillates in cycles of recurrence ("I continually desire to return") or expands as spatial explorations ("time travel constitutes a movement"). Their metaphors exalt creative amalgamation, interlacing inherited narratives into vibrant terrains where past, present, and future perpetually influence one another.

**Table 6.** Cross-character comparison.

| Character | Generation | Identity Metaphor | Emotion Metaphor | Time Metaphor |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ah Carol** | 1st | **IDENTITY IS INHERITED** (Generational Memory): "Thomas is a perfectly good name. It was your grandfather's middle name."[4], p. 38 **PARENTAL IDENTITY IS AUTHORITY AND CONTROL** (Internal Conflict): "You are coming home…there is no one to take care of me and your grandmother."[4], p. 249 | **EMOTIONAL PAIN IS PHYSICAL INVASION** (Stable): "'No.' The word cuts Carol's tongue as it slips out…Is this what you've been doing…?"[4], p. 42 | *(no distinct time metaphor in file)* |
| **Maa-maa** | 1st | **IDENTITY IS SPIRITUAL CONNECTION** (Generational Memory): "She had placed the jade buddha…'So you won't be lonely…'"[4], p. 81 | **LOVE IS NOURISHMENT** (Stable): "Eat up so you can grow up to be as strong as your je-je one day."[4], p. 46 | *(no distinct time metaphor in file)* |
| **Joshua** | 2nd | *(no identity metaphor coded for him in file)* | **ANGER IS A FORCE** (Stable): "Joshua looked at his children with that gaze that made Eva burn red and Tommy squirm."[4], p. 7 | **TIME IS A FORCE** (Stable): "Like a time bomb… Boom."[4], p. 81 **PAST IS BEHIND** (Generational Memory): "They were all slipping away."[4], pp. 91–92 **FUTURE IS AHEAD** (Stable): "You will see me again…Nothing will ever be the same again."[4], p. 91 **TIME TRAVEL IS A JOURNEY** (Stable): "A rooftop of dusk…an ocean of memories…"[4], p. 280 |
| **Lily** | 2nd | **CHILD IS A REFLECTION OF SELF** (Stable): "The child as a marvel."[4], p. 119 | *(no emotion metaphor coded for her)* | *(no time metaphor coded for her)* |

**Table 6.** *Cont.*

| Character | Generation | Identity Metaphor | Emotion Metaphor | Time Metaphor |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Tommy** | 3rd | **IDENTITY IS ASSERTIVE VOICE** (Internal Conflict): "Men can't be silent…Why are you always so afraid?"[4], p. 83 | **CURIOSITY IS A FORCE** (Internal Conflict): "If he were Eva… the way his insides twist into knots at the sight of the painting makes him afraid."[4], p. 85 | **TIME IS A CYCLE** (Internal Conflict): "I keep trying to stay here. I keep wanting to go back."[4], p. 137 |
| **Eva** | 3rd | *(no identity metaphor coded for her)* | **LOVE IS AN OBJECT** (Stable): "Love was nothing but a stifled thing. Ancient and boring and regimental."[4], p. 177 | **TIME TRAVEL IS A MOVEMENT** (Stable): "They reach out to grab each other's hands…'Open your eyes.'"[4], p. 18 |

# 4. Discussion

This study, informed by Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory[2,8], as well as Semino's narrative approach[3], demonstrates that characters in *The Moon Represents My Heart* utilize metaphors of identity, emotion, and time that both reflect and diverge from broader findings in diaspora literature. Bhandari and Alimir Mer depict first-generation speakers utilizing static "home" metaphors to maintain cultural roots[14,18]; however, our analysis reveals that Thai-authored English fiction transforms these into dynamic "hybrid spaces," illustrating both continuity and adaptation. According to the findings of Wang and Mohamed Ali, this research substantiates the argument regarding the role of metaphor as a narrative device and cultural instrument, although the Cantonese language employed by the character is not likely referenced in relation to its native function[18]. Indeed, the use of mother tongue represents the essence of Chinese cultural identity without any linguistic displacement, as the primary characters are multilingual, capable of utilizing both their native language and English. Kövecses underscores the universality of emotion metaphors as cognitive mappings, while cross-cultural nuances—such as "longing as tidal pull"—echo issues of intergenerational memory[1].

In addition to diaspora literature, conceptual metaphor and identity are crucial in this work. The research findings regarding identity metaphors corroborate Moje and Luke's[22] perspective on selfhood and subjectivity as influenced by socially and culturally generated phenomena. This study demonstrates that identity is influenced by the parental connections of the principal characters, mirroring Chinese cultural stereotypes and conventions that prioritize hierarchical authority, filial piety, and predetermined obligations. These metaphors underscore the unwavering authority of elders—especially grandparents—and the expectation that younger generations must comply, even in the face of dissent. The duality of conceptual metaphors illustrates the reinforcement of established cultural narratives alongside the rise of opposing actions. These findings regarding identity metaphors align with Emodi's assertion that metaphor serves as a bridge between personal emotions and societal critique[15]. This study employs a combined Lakoff–Semino-Kövecses framework to affirm the significance of SOURCE–TARGET mappings in relation to identity, emotion, and temporality. However, metaphors can occasionally overlap or remain ambiguous. The phrases EMOTION IS A FORCE and ANGER IS A FORCE illustrate that the conceptualization of force is robust; however, the textual indicators are predominantly visual or orthographic rather than metaphorical. In this context, certain emotional intensities may derive from typography and syntax, rather than a logical source domain. Beyond the counter-metaphors, the results also extend these concepts into the Thai diasporic context, demonstrating how metaphorical frameworks shape notions of belonging and agency in English-language literature by Thai authors.

This research is novel in the field, as it examines English-language novels by Thai authors published internationally, focusing on cultural identity and diaspora perspectives—unlike the studies on conceptual metaphor in Thai literature by Buakhao and Deocampo[5], Rodsap and Siriwat[6], and Shepherd[7]. Due to this novel perspective in the cognitive linguistics study, the results cannot be juxtaposed with prior studies. Notwithstanding these insights, the research does not address the disparity between English and Thai narratives: no direct comparison was conducted with the novel's original or translated Thai versions, nor were other Thai-authored works in English incorporated, thereby con-

straining the generalizability of the findings. Future research should integrate bilingual texts and a more extensive corpus to elucidate the variations of conceptual metaphors across languages and genres. This disparity highlights the necessity of cross-linguistic and comparative studies to comprehensively grasp the functioning of metaphorical framing within Thailand's developing literary diaspora. This study analyzes the functioning of metaphors related to authority, belonging, and hybrid space within narratives, thereby elucidating the negotiation of diaspora identity between inherited cultural frameworks and the realities of transnational existence. These metaphors not only illustrate characters' psychological conflicts but also function as cultural markers, delineating the evolving parameters of identity, memory, and emotional connection within the diasporic experience.

## 5. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that conceptual metaphors in Pim Wangtechawat's *The Moon Represents My Heart* serve as dynamic cognitive and narrative tools through which diasporic characters navigate emotion, time, and identity throughout three generations. First-generation speakers utilize metaphors of authority, inheritance, and collective memory (e.g., IDENTITY IS INHERITED; EMOTION IS A CONFINED SPACE), so reinforcing conventional cultural values. Second-generation protagonists reimagine these realms through adaptive, hybrid metaphors, illustrating the conflict between familial duty and individual freedom. Third-generation voices utilize fluid, self-expressive mappings (e.g., TIME TRAVEL IS A JOURNEY; IDENTITY IS ASSERTIVE VOICE), demonstrating both continuity with and divergence from ancestral narratives. Collectively, these patterns emphasize the fluidity of cultural identity and stress metaphors' crucial function in delineating intergenerational experiences in diasporic literature.

This research enhances metaphor analysis by combining Lakoff's structural mappings, Kövecses's culturally grounded emotion framework, and Semino's narrative functions, confirmed through a stringent two-round coding process and expert inter-rater reliability assessments (IOC $\geq$ 0.50). This study employs a multi-lens triangulation method on a Thai-authored English-language book, thereby expanding the parameters of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and pro-

viding a reproducible framework for subsequent investigations in bilingual and transnational settings.

The absence of direct comparison with the Thai equivalent of the novel or other English works written in Thai limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research should use bilingual corpora and cross-linguistic analyses to improve the comprehension of metaphorical framing across languages and genres. This study advances cognitive literary scholarship by demonstrating the reciprocal influence of metaphor on, and by, the evolving identities, emotions, and temporal experiences of diasporic communities.

## Supplementary Materials

The supplementary materials can be downloaded at: https://journals.bilpubgroup.com/files/fls-11223-Supplementary-Materials.zip. **File 1**. Coding dataset for the three thematic domains of Identity metaphor. **File 2.** Coding dataset for the three thematic domains of Emotion metaphor. **File 3.** Coding dataset for the three thematic domains of Time metaphor. **File 4**. Inter-rater validation records and Item–Objective Congruence (IOC) scores. **File 5**. Theory triangulation and score report. **File 6**. Research findings.

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## Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

## Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

## Data Availability Statement

All data produced or examined in this investigation are contained within this published paper and its Supplementary Information files. The principal text examined, Pim Wangtechawat's *The Moon Represents My Heart*, is accessible to the public via the publisher. The whole metaphor-coding dataset, with item-level codes and inter-rater validation records, is available as Supplementary files 1–6. No

supplementary data were produced or utilized in this study.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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