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CULTURAL WORKS

Malaysia's Warm Weather as a Metaphor

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Abstract

Conveying one's sense of belonging to a country can be challenging. Often, it is expressed in a rather clichéd, impersonal manner. However, the clever use of imagery can evoke relatable, authentic, and lasting impressions. Borrowing from a local Chinese folk song genre, [Tan & Teoh \(2006\)](#)'s 'Yong Malaixiya de Tianqi Shuo Ai Ni' (Let Me Use Malaysia's Warm Weather to Say, I Love You) expresses deep affection for the writers' native land using the 'warm' Malaysian weather as an apt metaphor. Located just north of the Equator, Malaysia experiences high temperatures all year round. Malaysian hospitality is likened to its weather, and this admirable quality is apparent in the everyday lives, cultures, and traditions of Malaysians. Unable to exploit the vibrant colours of seasonal changes that temperate countries experience, Malaysian songwriters use this endearing weather metaphor to highlight the warmth of the country and its people, serenading readers with a unique, romantic, and catchy refrain.

Keywords

Malaysia; Weather; Chinese Folk Songs; Hospitality; Belonging

Popularised by singer Aniu (Tan Kheong-seong), the Chinese folk song 'Let Me Use Malaysia's Warm Weather to Say, I Love You' has become a favourite community entertainment since its release in 2006. The lyrics convey the sentiments of Malaysian Chinese, often exploring themes of longing, homecoming, and ethnic identity. Songs of this genre reflect Malaysia's multiethnic reality, blending language and tradition to create narratives that resonate emotionally. The chorus incorporates verses from 'Rasa Sayang,' a traditional song of the Malay Archipelago. In addition to its distinctive local characteristics, the song highlights

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Malaysia's linguistic diversity, where code-switching between Malay and Chinese, along with other languages, is a vibrant feature of everyday life.

ORIGINAL SONG

用马来西亚的天气来说爱你
词：陈温法，曲：张映坤

只是我太爱这片土地
当然也爱上了它的天气
我只想讲一些我的朋友们也能明白的甜言蜜语
让我用马来西亚的天气来说想你
让我用马来西亚的天气来说爱你
我不能说这个秋季的红叶不够美丽

【副歌】

Rasa sayang hey
Rasa sayang sayang hey
Hei lihat nona jauh
Rasa sayang sayang hey

我不能说这个寒冬为何会有绵绵细雨
不是我的情怀不够诗情画意
只是我生长的这片土地上只有雨季和旱季
亲爱的，别骂我总是这么的脚踏实地
不去编些春风秋雨的心情来哄哄你
说春深夏炎幻想着和你一起漫步青青草地
说秋红冬寒叫我回忆曾有的往昔
亲爱的，请你原谅我没有浪漫的恋情

TRANSLATION

Let Me Use Malaysia's Warm Weather to Say, I Love You
Lyrics: Tan Boon Huat
Song: Teoh Yang Khoon
Translation: Florence Kuek

It's just that I am deeply in love with this land
I'm also in love with the weather
I just want to say sweet things that my friends can appreciate
Let me express how much I miss you, through the Malaysian weather
Let me express how much I love you, through the Malaysian weather

【Chorus】

I've got that loving feeling, hey!
That loving feeling, hey!
See that girl in the distance,
I've got that loving feeling, hey!

I can't say our leaves in autumn aren't pretty enough
I can't say why it always drizzles in winter

It's not that my feelings are devoid of poetic sentiments
 It's just that there're only the dry and the wet seasons in the
 land in which I was born, and raised
 My dearest, please do not admonish me for my directness
 I won't woo you using the sentiments carried by the spring breeze and autumn rain
 I won't speak of a stroll across the fields with you in spring or summer,
 recount our shared memories of red maple and snowy days
 Forgive me, my dear, for not having these romantic feelings

Conceptual Metaphor

Inspired by Malaysia's 'warm,' tropical weather, the song's lyrics employ a vivid metaphor grounded in seasonal imagery, a feature often found in Western poetry. The song suggests that the absence of spring blooms or autumn leaves does not diminish the romantic scenery experienced by locals. In Malaysia, the heat and rain reflect the rhythm of daily life and livelihood. The title, 'Let Me Use Malaysia's Warm Weather to Say, I Love You,' conveys directness and sincerity. Its chorus, which is meant to be sung as a group, aligns with the cultural ethos of community and hospitality, encapsulating a deep sense of belonging and inclusivity.

Despite its simplicity, the lyrics offer insight into how metaphors may engage a source domain to embody the target domain so as to bring forth profound meaning. The idea of conceptual metaphor is appropriate to illustrate this use of metaphor. [Lakoff and Johnson \(1980, 1999\)](#) first laid down the initial definition of conceptual metaphor. It concerns the understanding of one domain of experience (that is typically abstract) in terms of another (that is typically concrete). This standard understanding of conceptual metaphor underwent some refinements and was challenged by different views. Whatever its variation, conceptual metaphors describe how cognitive mechanisms account for the construction of the meaning in a sentence or expression ([Kövecses 2019](#)). Thus, the use of 'Malaysian weather' in the source domain conveys the metaphor of 'Malaysian hospitality,' as in its target domain, signifying the characteristics of 'warm' and welcoming.

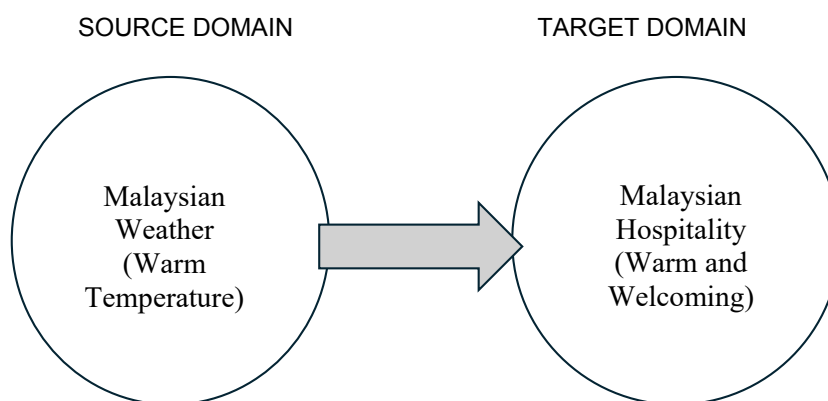


Figure 1. The Conceptual Metaphor in 'Let Me Use Malaysia's Warm Weather to Say, I Love You' adapted from [Tamara and Arredondo's Conceptual Metaphor framework \(2022\)](#)

The warm and welcoming notion in its repeating lines 'let me express how much I love you, through the Malaysian weather' is further expressed in its chorus – in the happy tone of a young man seeing a beautiful lady coming his way, i.e., 'Hei lihat nona jauh, Rasa saying sayang hey!' (See that girl in the distance, I've got that loving feeling, hey!). This simple 4/4- time signature folk song, free of syncopation or off-beat rhythms, reflects a postcolonial reimagining of love and identity within a communal Southeast Asian context.

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