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从认知角度看
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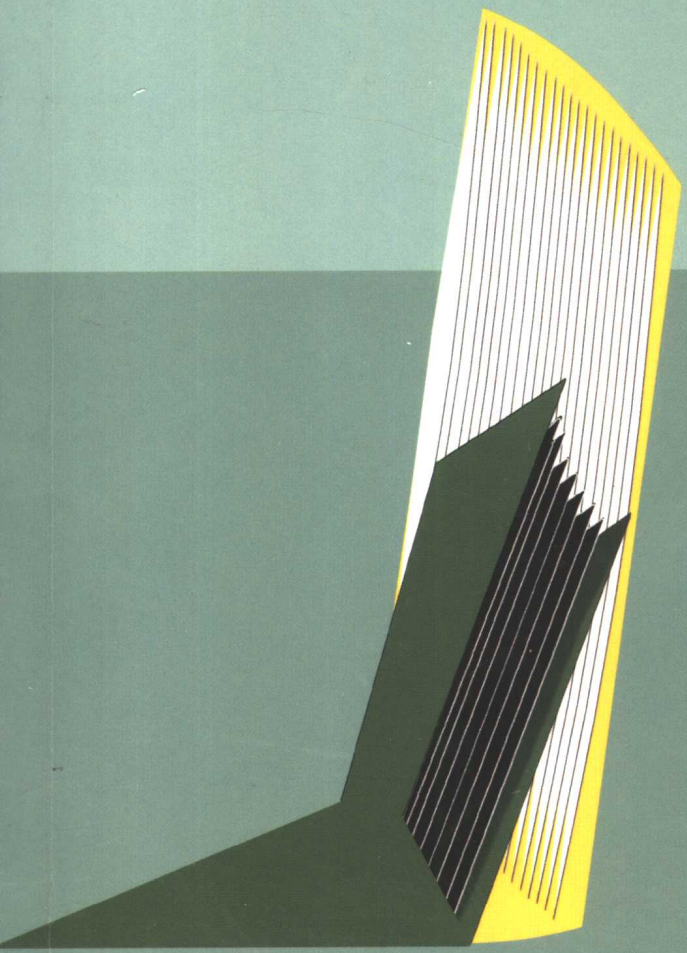
A COGNITIVE APPROACH TO SPATIAL METAPHORS IN ENGLISH AND CHINESE

蓝 纯 著



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蓝 纯 著

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总 序

中国外语教育研究中心决定将其专/兼职研究员近几年的个人科研成果及课题成果组成学术著作系列，由外语教学与研究出版社（外研社）出版。外研社社长李朋义同志请我讲讲这套系列学术专著的来龙去脉以及其性质、特点，为丛书做个总序。

我先简要介绍一下中国外语教育研究中心的基本情况。北京外国语大学中国外语教育研究中心成立于2000年3月。学校投入百万余元装修了近300平米的办公用房和图书资料室，累计购买了数十台计算机和其他各种科研设备。当年7月，中心通过了教育部专家组的检查验收，9月教育部正式下文，批准中心为全国高校人文社会科学100个重点研究基地之一。

中心的研究人员构成主要是北外外国语言研究所、英语学院、高级翻译学院和应用英语学院的多名教授、副教授，中心同时还聘请了本校日本学研究中心和俄语学院的两位教授，北京大学、社科院语言所、解放军外国语学院、华南理工大学、南京大学等单位的几位教授为兼职研究员。大部分研究员具有博士学位，其中有几位是剑桥大学、香港中文大学和其他国外知名大学毕业的博士。研究人员实行流动管理，带科研项目进入中心，完成项目后可以离开，有新的项目可以延聘。专职和兼职研究员各保持在8－10人左右。

该中心的总体任务是，除语言基础研究外，还系统研究中国外语教育中的各种问题：从外语政策、规划到发展策略，从外语教育理论到教育实践，从教材编写到课程设置，从课堂教学到测试评估，从中小学外语教学到高校的专业外语和公共外语教学。中心的发展目标是建成外语教育的科研攻关基地，外语研究人才的培养基地（硕士生、博士生和博士后），资料图书和信息交流基地，为有关部门提供相关咨询的基地。中心力图成为全国第一的外语教育问题研究机构。

目前，中心承担一项国家社会科学基金项目和六项教育部的重大项目，与加拿大合作开展一项国际研究，其中包括中国高校外语教学改革现状与发展策略研究、英汉平行语料库的创建与应用研究、英语能力测试的理论研究和试题开发、高校英语教师教育与发展研究、二语习得理论研究、网络技术在外语教育中的应用、英语学习词典的研编等。这些项目，有的已经发表；

有的已经完成，成果不久即可问世；有的将写出咨询报告。目前中心招收硕士研究生40余名，博士生20余名，博士后1名。这些学生在校期间必须参加中心的部分研究工作，必须有论文发表；博士生和博士后的研究成果必须达到出版水平。

从建立之日起，中心就与外研社有着密切的合作关系。外研社给予中心大力支持，中心通过外研社的研究发展中心为社里提供咨询服务、项目策划、作者联系、稿件终审等。3年来，中心协助外研社举办了多期大学英语教师的暑期培训班（共约3万人），中心研究员每期都提供几个学术报告，同时也对教师进行问卷调查和小组访谈，双方都收到良好效果。更值得一提的是，中心与外研社合作，设立“中国英语教育研究基金”，外研社提供50万元科研经费，每年都组织课题的招标活动，课题内容与中心重大项目相联系，中心负责审查批准立项的项目，培训主持人，最后对报告进行终审等。项目的研究报告将与中心的主题报告同集出版。同时，中心与外研社达成协议，中心的一切科研成果，由外研社独家出版。

这套学术著作系列包括四种科研成果形式。首先是中心承担的重大科研项目的成果，或者以专著形式，或者以系列论文形式，总之是围绕一个课题而展开的。这种研究的优点是：全部为实证研究，是有组织、有计划、规模较大的调查研究；全部是有学术意义的课题，有极大的探索性；这类成果也包括给教育主管部门的咨询报告，为决策者出谋划策。其次就是专/兼职研究员们自选课题的科研成果。这些项目虽然没有在科研主管部门立项，但都是研究员们最感兴趣的课题，有的是多年积累沉淀的最后结晶，有的是把当年的博士论文继续修改、完善，使之与当今研究接轨的成果。第三类是，我们自己培养的博士生和博士后的成果，修改之后，通过评审，达到出版水平，也被纳入这个系列。第四类是学术会议论文集。中心每年举行一次学术研讨会，通过评审的优秀论文由中心编辑加工并加上适当的评介后结集出版。因此，这套系列专著的内容将十分广阔丰富，既有理论性很强的成果，也有突出实用性的成果，形式多样。我们的学术著作丛书是个开放的系列，首批已经成形的有9种，但随着中心研究工作的深入和发展，将会有更多有价值的专著问世。

我非常高兴地向读者推荐这套学术著作系列，我相信它会对语言研究者、外语教育研究者、外语教师、语言学硕士生和博士生及对我国外语教学有兴趣者，都有一定的参考价值。

我谨代表中国外语教育研究中心向外研社表示诚挚的谢意。

刘润清

2003年3月于北京

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Preface

This book is based on my Ph. D. thesis submitted to the Department of English, Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 1999. The research adopts the cognitive linguistic framework developed by Lakoff (1987, 1993) and Langacker (1987,1997) in carrying out a comparative analysis of spatial metaphors in English and Chinese. By taking the cognitive approach to metaphor, this study is subscribed to the view that metaphorical thinking is part of the cognitive processes through which the human mind conceptualizes the world. By focusing on spatial metaphors for investigation, this study assumes that spatial metaphors, through which many of our fundamental concepts are structured, play an especially indispensable role in our abstract thinking.

The study examines the similarities and differences of the metaphorical extensions of four image schematic concepts, namely UP, DOWN, SHANG and XIA. Two groups of data are collected and analyzed, i. e. lexicographical data obtained from dictionaries and corpora data. Lexicographical data is adopted so that the metaphorical extensions of the four concepts under concern as reflected in the lexicon can be discovered; corpora data is adopted so that the distributions of those metaphorical extensions as reflected in real life English and Chinese can be revealed.

Through both qualitative and quantitative analyses, the study has found out that:

(1) All the four concepts under investigation are mainly used to structure the same four abstract target domains, namely STATES, QUANTITY, TIME and SOCIAL HIERARCHY.

(2) A common tendency emerges from both the lexicographical data and the corpora data, which seems to suggest that in both English and Chinese, upward trajectories are linked with things considered to be desirable in the culture and downward trajectories are linked with things considered to be undesirable in the

culture.

(3) For all the four concepts, there has also been noticed an elaboration from verertical dimension to horizontal dimension.

(4) Remarkable similarities mark the metaphorical extensions of UP/DOWN and SHANG/XIA.

The findings of this study offer a piece of evidence for the possible existence of a universal spatial metaphorical system as predicted by Johnson (1992), Lakoff (1993) and Sinha (1995). The cognitive linguistic claims that our abstract reasoning is at least partially a metaphorical version of image-schematic reasoning and that metaphorical mappings are grounded in our bodily experience are also reinforced.

Many people have contributed to the completion of this book. Among them, I would like to express my deepest thanks to Dr. Jiang Yan, who read carefully two earlier versions of my Ph.D. thesis and gave critical comments, Dr. Mary Willes and Dr. Carol McLennan, who went through all my English data analysis with amazing patience, and Prof. Chen Guohua and Prof. Wu Yi'an, who helped me give the final touches to the present book.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This is a contrastive study of spatial metaphors in English and Chinese carried out within the framework of cognitive linguistics. It is assumed in the study that there exists an intermediate level '*cognition*' between language and the physical world (Svorou 1994, Gardenfors 1996a, Geiger & Rudzka-Ostyn 1993, Langacker 1987, Lakoff 1987), and an experiential view towards cognition is adopted. This view, also known as 'experiential realism', hypothesizes that (1) basic-level categories and image schemas are the two kinds of preconceptual structure directly meaningful to us; and (2) one way in which abstract conceptual structure arises from these two kinds of preconceptual structure is by metaphorical mapping (Lakoff 1987: 267 – 8).

By taking the cognitive approach to metaphor, this study is subscribed to the view that metaphor is essentially a mapping across conceptual domains; that metaphorical thinking is part of the cognitive processes through which the human mind conceptualizes the world; that underlying the numerous linguistic expressions of metaphor, there is a huge coherent system of conceptual metaphors operating without our consciousness and organizing our thinking; that studies of the basic conceptual metaphors of a language can reveal a lot about how the native speakers of that language come to terms with the world.

Since space enjoys a privileged position as a foundational ontological category in language, and since the human conception of space seems to structure other parts of the conceptual system through metaphorical mappings, this study chooses to focus on spatial metaphors, i.e. those metaphors which give a non-spatial concept, such as TIME, a spatial orientation, such as FUTURE IS IN FRONT. By choosing spatial metaphors as the focus of investigation, this research makes the following assumptions:

- Many of our fundamental concepts are structured in terms of spatial metaphors, which are not created out of fancy, but rooted in our physical, social and cultural experience.
- Our physical, social and cultural experience provides many possible bases for

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spatial metaphors. Which ones are chosen, and which ones become salient, may vary from culture to culture (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 17 – 19).

- A contrastive study of spatial metaphors in English and Chinese can thus reveal the similarities and differences between the ways the English and the Chinese conceptualize the world through their SPACE concepts.

Two English space concepts, namely UP and DOWN, and two Chinese space concepts, namely SHANG and XIA, and the metaphorical extensions they have developed, constitute the main research issues of this study. The reason why UP/DOWN and SHANG/XIA are chosen over other spatial concepts like FRONT/BACK (QIAN/HOU) and LEFT/RIGHT (ZUO/YOU) is that evidence from both the evolution of spatial concepts and from children's acquisition of spatial terms seems to suggest that UP/DOWN has priority over FRONT/BACK and LEFT/RIGHT (this point is elaborated in Chapter 3).

Like any other concepts, UP, DOWN, SHANG and XIA remain abstract and elusive, and cannot easily be accessed to except by the lexical items that are used to realize them. It is one of the basic assumptions of cognitive linguistics that "semantic structure is equated with conceptual structure and meaning is assumed to equal conceptualization" (Smith 1993: 531). This makes it possible for the following strategy to be adopted in data collection and analysis: we examine the concepts UP, DOWN, SHANG and XIA through the lexical items which tag each of them respectively.

The database of this research is built up on two resources: dictionaries and corpora. Dictionaries are used in order that the conventionalized metaphorical extensions of the four concepts under concern as reflected in the lexicon can be found out. Corpora are used in order that evidence can also be provided from real life language for the metaphorical extensions of the four concepts and that comparisons between the distributions of the metaphorical extensions in English and Chinese can be carried out.

The research has the following objectives:

- To find out the metaphorical extensions along which UP and DOWN develop.
- To find out the metaphorical extensions along which SHANG and XIA develop.
- To explicate the experiential bases of the metaphorical extensions uncovered on the one hand, and the realizations of those metaphorical extensions in everyday life on the other, which, according to Lakoff (1993: 244), are two

sides of the same coin.

- To discover the similarities and differences between the ways the English and the Chinese develop their UP/DOWN and SHANG/XIA concepts via metaphors, and between the ways they conceptualize other domains via their UP/DOWN and SHANG/XIA metaphors.

The study contributes to cognitive linguistic research in three ways. First, it offers a systematic comparative analysis of the metaphorical extensions of the two English concepts and the two Chinese concepts within a cognitive linguistic framework. Second, evidence is provided from the analysis for the cognitive linguistic claim that metaphorical mapping of the image schematic structure of the source domain onto that of the target domain gives rise to abstract concepts and abstract reasoning. Evidence is also provided for the possible existence of a universal spatial metaphorical system, which has so far largely remained a speculation. The study also reinforces the claim that metaphorical mappings are not arbitrary, but are grounded in human bodily experience and daily knowledge. Third, the study contributes to research methodology as well: it shows that, handled properly, the traditional dictionary-based approach combined with the modern corpus-based approach towards data collection and analysis can be fruitfully exploited in the field of cognitive linguistics, a field which has sometimes been criticized for relying on too narrow a range of data (Stibbe 1996, Kyratzis 1997, Goatly 1997); it also demonstrates how two typologically different languages can be brought together for comparative purposes within a cognitive linguistic framework (Wu 1997).

The book proceeds in the following way:

Chapter 2 lays out the historical background of the study, where the Aristotelian approach, the traditional linguistic approach, the pragmatic approach and the interactionist approach to metaphor are briefly discussed. A section is also devoted to *biyu* studies in China, where some prominent figures in the field over the centuries are briefly reviewed.

Chapter 3 sets up the theoretical framework underlying the cognitive linguistic approach to metaphor, where the experiential basis of cognition, the conceptual nature of metaphor and the internal structure of metaphor are evaluated. The chapter also has a section on the primacy of space and of spatial metaphors and another section on the image schematic structures of UP/DOWN and SHANG/XIA.

Chapter 4 outlines the research methodology and gives an account of why and how the dictionary-based analysis is combined with the corpus-based analysis. Chapter 5 presents the metaphorical extensions of each of the four concepts and the interplay among them as reflected in the lexicon. Special attention is paid to the experiential grounding and the realizations of those metaphorical extensions detected. The correlations between UP and DOWN and between SHANG and XIA are emphasized. Similarities and differences between the two English concepts and the two Chinese concepts are also highlighted. Chapter 6 reports the findings of both qualitative and quantitative analyses of the corpora data, where the main focus is on finding out the distributions of the different metaphorical extensions as represented in the corpora and on revealing the discrepancies between English and Chinese in this respect. Finally Chapter 7 draws conclusions out of the above findings and points out possible directions future research can pursue.

Chapter 2 The Historical Background

Metaphor has been an object of study since Aristotle and Confucius. In the West there have been many different approaches to metaphor: the Aristotelian approach studies metaphor as a transference of names; the traditional linguistic approach considers metaphor as a deviant phenomenon in language which produces either a false statement or an ungrammatical sentence; the pragmatic approach takes metaphor as a special speech act, to make sense out of which calls for a special set of principles; and finally the interactionist approach understands metaphor as an interaction between two subject systems. In China the dominant approach over the centuries has been the rhetorical approach which studies metaphor as a figure of speech. This rhetorical approach pays special attention to distinguishing metaphor from other figures of speech and to dividing metaphor into incessantly increasing sub-groups. In what follows we will review these different approaches briefly. In doing so we will lay out the historical background against which the cognitive linguistic approach to metaphor is introduced.

2.1 The Aristotelian Approach: Metaphor as a Transference of Names

One of the most frequently quoted sayings of Aristotle on metaphor is the following definition given in *Poetics*: "Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy" (*Poetics* 1457 b 6 – 9). Three features of this definition are worth special attention (Ricoeur 1977: 16 – 20):

1. Metaphor is considered as something that happens only to the noun.

In connecting metaphor to noun as against to discourse, Aristotle constrains the direction of the history of metaphor studies for 2,000 years. On the one hand, confining metaphor as one of the "word-focused figures of speech" (Ricoeur 1977:

16) leads to an extreme refinement in taxonomy. On the other hand, the price it carries is also high, because "it becomes impossible to recognize a certain homogeneous functioning that ... operates at all the strategic levels of language — words, sentences, discourse, texts, styles" (ibid.: 17).

2. Metaphor is defined in terms of a metaphor.

According to the definition, metaphor is a kind of transference, a movement from one location to another. What is significant of this is that it shows that Aristotle created a metaphor to explain metaphor. As Ricoeur puts it, "the definition of metaphor returns on itself" (ibid.: 18). This can be taken as a piece of evidence in support of the contemporary cognitive approach to metaphor, for if we cannot even find a non-metaphorical standpoint from which we could look upon metaphor without being influenced by it, it does prove how profoundly metaphor has influenced our thinking.

3. Metaphor is the transposition of a name "that belongs to something else" (*Poetics* 1457 b 7).

The exact word Aristotle used is *allotrios*, which means *alien*. This term is opposed to *ordinary* or *current*, which, according to Aristotle, refers to "used by everybody" or "in general use in a country". The implication is therefore metaphor is neither used by everybody nor in general use in a country, i.e. metaphor is a deviation from the ordinary mode of working of language. It follows that the use of metaphor is close to the use of strange, ornamental, or coined terms.

Besides his classical definition of metaphor, another most frequently quoted saying of Aristotle is his comment on the mastery of metaphor: "... the greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor. This alone cannot be imparted to another: it is the mark of genius, for to make a good metaphor implies an eye for resemblances" (*Poetics* 1459 a 3 – 8).

Three false assumptions can be observed from this quotation (Richards 1936: 90):

1. "An eye for resemblances" is a gift that some men have but others have not.

2. The command of metaphor cannot be taught.

3. Instead of the omnipresent principle of all its free action, metaphor remains something special and exceptional in the use of language, a deviation from its normal mode of working.

Richards puts forward his interactionist point of view on the basis of rejecting

these false assumptions, to which we shall turn in Section 2.4. Before that, we will take a closer look at two other approaches to metaphor.

2.2 The Traditional Linguistic Approach: The Controversion Theory and the Deviance Theory

The traditional linguistic approach is mainly represented by two theories: the controversion theory and the deviance theory (Mac Cormac 1990 [1985]). Following Aristotle, the major assumption of this approach is that metaphor is a breakaway from the normal function of language; hence it lies outside the interest of linguists; if we are to account for it, special grammatical or semantic rules are needed.

The controversion theory observes that metaphor differs from ordinary language in that a literal reading of a metaphor produces a false statement. For example, in

我是一匹来自北方的狼

(wo shi yipi laizi beifang de lang)

(I be one *pi* come from north *de* wolf)

(I am a wolf coming from the north)

the identification of I with *wolf* is literally impossible: I, as a human being, cannot be equated with a wolf. To avoid this falsehood, the controversion theory suggests that the metaphor must be read speculatively as if it were true or false. To return to the example, the reader/hearer may paraphrase it in this way: I am like a wolf in certain respects and different from it in others. Yet this solution is hardly satisfactory, because first it does not really capture the way the reader/hearer arrives at an understanding, and second it robs the metaphor of most of its suggestive force. The controversion theory thus poses a dilemma for its holders: "either metaphors assert falsehoods or the only legitimate metaphors are the least interesting ones, the ones that collapse into ordinary language..." (Mac Cormac 1990: 29).

The deviance theory claims that metaphors are characterized by their intentional misuse of language in that literally read metaphors are ungrammatical. For example, in "The telephone is my umbilical cord to the world", the semantic

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