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A COGNITIVE ANALYSIS OF SNAKE AND
LION METAPHORS IN MANDARIN
CHINESE AND BRITISH ENGLISH

汉语与英国英语中的 动物隐喻认知研究

魏利霞 著



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内 容 简 介

The present study investigated snake and lion metaphors with both human beings and non-human beings as the target domain. Apart from showing that universality and variation between animal metaphors exist in Chinese and English, the study also modified Kövecses's (2002, 2010) dichotomy categorization of metaphors by adding another type, that is metaphors that are image and knowledge-based at the same time. Meanwhile, it has refined the Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) by proposing a revised version which adds an output space and allocates more attention to context in the process of interpreting metaphors.

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DEDICATION

To

My beloved parents, Wei Xiaozhen, Su Meiying;

To

My most beloved lecturer, Professor Zhou Zhen,

Who is as noble as a lion!

FOREWORD

This book is a revised version of my dissertation (2012, Putra University of Malaysia). In particular, the content of one section entitled "Theoretical framework" in Chapter 1 has been synthesized to Chapter 1. In addition, when the Conceptual Blending Theory was introduced in Chapter 1, the original version introduced it mainly according to Fauconnier's (1997) and Turner's (1996) description. However, the revised version introduced this theory mainly based on Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) description and synthesized necessary content of Fauconnier's (1997) and Turner's (1996). Moreover, it is a revised version because it boiled down the past studies on animal metaphors from a whole literature review section to a few paragraphs and inserted them in the body. To the methodology, considering its creative design, although the data source as well as the research design has not appeared in the body of the book, they are attached to the appendices. Finally, although the results for the snake and the lion metaphor have been displayed independently in Chapters 2 and 3, the synthesized findings from the research on these two animals have to be presented in the book too. Thus, the major findings are arranged in the INTRODUCTION section.

Specifically, after introducing the importance of metaphor, the introduction section also makes clear the objectives as well as the research questions that the study addressed. Subsequently, the major findings based on the results to both snake metaphors and lion metaphors are summarized. Since the Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the Conceptual Blending Theory are very important in investigating cognitive semantics, they are introduced briefly in Chapter 1. Following that, Chapter 2 discusses the results to the research questions obtained from the data for

the snake metaphorical expressions and metaphors. Possible reasons that lead to the differences between the snake metaphorical expressions and metaphors in Mandarin Chinese and British English are also discussed. The metaphor theories of CMT and CBT are adopted to interpret the typical fixed expressions and the conceptual metaphors generalized from the data where necessary. Chapter 3 presents and compares the results obtained for the lion expressions and metaphors in these two languages. In addition, a discussion of the reasons for the differences between the lion metaphorical expressions and metaphors in Mandarin Chinese and British English is provided where necessary. During the process of comparison, the CMT and CBT are applied to the interpretation of some typical fixed expressions and the conceptual metaphors that are generalized from the data in these two languages. Finally, Chapter 4 provides the revised version of the Conceptual Blending Theory which is derived from the study.

Upon the accomplishment of this book, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to the members on my Thesis Supervisory Committee and Examination Committee first. I am grateful for Dr. Lim, Dr. Mardziah and Dr. Tan for giving me constructive suggestion by interpreting the data from the cultural perspective and improving my work into a much concise one.

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and the tables I adopted to list the domains. Meanwhile, I'd also like to thank Daniel Casasanto for his help in offering me the latest articles concerned with embodiment.

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Last but not least, I am very grateful to my family members and my teacher parents Professor Zhou Zhen and Professor Ding Wenying. In particular, I own sincere thanks and gratitude to my parents for their understanding and support to my study. I am indebted to my teacher parents for the generous encouragement they consistently elaborated upon me which was the spine of my spirit and uplifted me to head forward all the time.

In close, I am very thankful for all kinds of help I've obtained from those I have mentioned above but I myself am responsible for all the blemishes and inappropriate opinions in the book.

Wei Lixia

July, 2013

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by emphasizing the importance of metaphor to human beings' thought, and then it highlights the lack of studies on animal metaphors, particularly the metaphors concerned with animals in Mandarin Chinese and British English cross linguistically. In order to address this lack, this study targets three objectives to locate the similarities and differences between Mandarin Chinese and British English animal metaphors by focusing on snake and lion metaphorical expressions. Next, the objectives and research questions formulated for the study are put forward. Subsequently, the major findings derived from this study are mentioned briefly. This is followed by the outline of this book.

The importance of the metaphor

Cognitive Semantics is one of the two important parts in Cognitive Linguistics (Evans V et al. 2006: 4). It represents "an approach to the study of mind and its relationship with embodied experience and culture" (Evans V et al. 2006: 153) and it employs language as the main methodological tool of doing research on conceptual organization and structure.

As an important section of cognitive semantics, metaphor fails to receive just treatment neither from most people nor from the non-cognitive linguists. The former regard it as a device of poetic imagination and rhetorical flourish on the one hand and a feature of

language on the other, which result in their belief that they can handle things without paying heed to metaphor^①. The latter only regards it as one figure of speech which is only an ornamental device used in rhetorical style (Lee D 2001: 6, Ungerer F et al. 1996: 115).

However, many cognitive linguists have realized the importance of metaphor, and hold a different point of view from most people or the non-cognitive linguists. For example, Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 3) believe that metaphor is ubiquitous in human beings' daily life not only in language, but also in thought and action, which means human beings' ordinary conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature and one way to seek this out is by looking at language where conceptual metaphor is pervasive in both thought and language (Lakoff G et al. 1999: 45). In other words, metaphor is an integral part of everyday language and thought (Turner M 1991, Sweetser E 1990). Johnson (1987: 15) also claims that a metaphor is not just a linguistic expression used for artistic or rhetorical purposes but it is a process of human understanding by which people obtain meaningful experience that they can understand. That means metaphor may be regarded as "an essential tool in language, thought, and communication" (Steen G 2008: 214). Furthermore, cognitive linguists also agree that the pervasiveness of metaphor lies in its grounding in the embodied experience of human beings.

The lives of humans are intimately connected to animals. Since humans have embodied mind, and their understanding of the world as well as their experience in the world interact, whatever concepts they have are grounded in the experience and the culture they are involved and immersed in. In the same vein, out of their intimate connection with animals, all of these will be reflected in their daily life.

① Metaphor: It refers to the conceptual mapping, which is easily confused with "metaphorical expression" that refers to an individual linguistic expression that is sanctioned by a mapping (Lakoff, 2006: 192).

Therefore, people might assume that there are a lot of metaphors that can be generated from people's understanding about animals. However, studies on animal expressions are relatively few (Hsieh S C Y 2006, 2004) and studies on animal metaphors across cultures are not extensive enough (Talebinejad M R et al. 2005). The number of studies is in fact not in line with the status occupied by animals in humans' hearts and minds. Therefore, this state of affairs leaves a lot of room for continued research in this particular area of metaphors.

In addition, Kövecses (2010: 103) states that there are two trends in researching metaphors. One trend focuses on metaphor universality which is explainable with embodiment. The other trend focuses on metaphor variation which can be explained with context. In addition, he also distinguishes two different methods of metaphor research (Kövecses Z 2005: 32). One is cognitively-oriented which adopts self-made data for analysis, and the other is language-use-oriented which adopts corpus as data source. In other words, the cognitively-oriented method uses de-contextualized data to research on metaphor, while the language-use-oriented method uses contextualized data to do the research.

Nicaise (2010: 65) noticed that most research studies adopted the cognitively-oriented method on metaphor research. The demerits of adopting such method on metaphor research are obvious. First, the conclusion derived on the basis of self-made or de-contextualized data is up to the readers' decision on whether the examples made by the researchers are plausible or not (Brandt L et al. 2005: 220). Second, analyzing a metaphor based on de-contextualized data cannot guarantee the full exploration of the metaphor's meaning (Coulson S et al. 2005: 1522). Therefore, many scholars advocate the use of contextualized data in research and emphasize the importance of context in metaphor understanding (Brandt L et al. 2005: 219, Littlemore J 2003: 283, Brandt L et al. 2002: 69).