

On the Relationship Between Metaphor and Cultural Models – with data from Chinese and English language*

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Abstract

Does metaphor constitute or reflect cultural models? As to the answer, some claims that cultural models exist without prior metaphorical understanding, and some others hold that cultural models, especially those for abstract concepts are basically metaphorical. It is proposed, in the paper, with diverse examples from English and Chinese language, that the relationship between metaphor and cultural models is not an either-or one, but one of mutual dependence and benefits. In other words, some cultural models, especially the abstract ones, are constituted via metaphor, while cultural models function as filters to determine the linguistic instantiation of certain metaphors. Furthermore, metaphor and cultural models interact with each other, pushing the two spiraling upward.

Konstituieren oder spiegeln Metaphern kulturelle Modelle? Antworten auf diese Frage fallen je nach Fach- und Fragerichtung recht unterschiedlich aus. Einige veranschlagen die Existenz kultureller Modelle ohne metaphorische Schemata, während andere wiederum kulturelle Modelle als genuin metaphorisch charakterisieren. Der vorliegende Beitrag untersucht anhand von Beispielen aus dem Englischen und dem Chinesischen die Beziehung von Metaphern und kulturellen Modellen. Das Augenmerk der Analyse liegt dabei auf der Wechselbeziehung und dem gegenseitigen Nutzen beider Phänomene, in denen Metaphern für die Entwicklung abstrakter kultureller Modelle grundlegend sind und kulturelle Modelle als konzeptuelle Filter bei der Entwicklung sprachlicher Metaphern Pate stehen. Metaphern und Modelle, so das Ergebnis, scheinen also auf unterschiedlichen Ebenen miteinander zu interagieren.

0. Introduction

Metaphor and cultural models are two notions that have become extremely influential in recent decades in attempts to describe and characterize the human conceptual system. And as to their relationship, there are two schools of thought. Some scholars claim that cultural models exist without prior metaphorical understanding. In other words, we are equipped with a primary

* In the process of composing this paper, I have received encouragement and insightful suggestions from Professor Edward Slingerland at the University of British Columbia, Canada. I would like to thank professor Slingerland for his help and guidance to me while I was visiting the University of British Columbia. Doctor Gerry Staley and his wife Betty Staley have helped me with the language and some of the examples in this paper. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to them too. My gratitude also extends to the editors from *metaphorik.de*, for the time and efforts they put in reviewing and commenting my paper.

literal understanding of cultural models (e.g. Quinn 1991). Others, however, hold that cultural models, especially those for abstract concepts are inherently metaphorical; that is, they are constituted by metaphor. (e.g. Lakoff/Johnson 1980; Lakoff/Kövecses 1987). Thus, the question remains: what is the relationship between metaphor and cultural models? Does metaphor constitute or merely reflect cultural models?

As cognitive linguists have illustrated that metaphors are rooted in our bodily experience. Here, “bodily experience” should be interpreted as “referring to our bodily function and interaction with the outside physical world, and our knowledge so derived” (Ning Yu 1998: 43). However, the bodily experience can only tell what possible metaphors are. According to Ning Yu (*ibid*), whether these potential metaphors are actually selected in a given culture is largely dependent upon the cultural models shared by individuals living in this culture. So, our focus will go to the examination of the different linguistic manifestations of metaphors in English and in Chinese, to have a look at the corresponding cultural models. As to the linguistic data, we have mainly utilized those spoken daily by English or Chinese speakers. If the data are derived from dictionaries or other researchers, we reveal the source of quotation. Moreover, each metaphorical expression is shown in bold type. By doing this, the author intends to contribute some knowledge to the above-mentioned discussion about the relationship between metaphor and cultural models from the perspectives of English and Chinese. The belief is that the relationship between the two is not an either-or-one, but a bilateral one. That is, they are interactive in that some cultural models, especially those for abstract concepts, are largely conceptualized metaphorically, while on the other hand what linguistic manifestations are in practical use in different languages is determined by the corresponding cultural models. As Basso (1976: 117) once said:

FOR IT IS IN METAPHOR, PERHAPS MORE DRAMATICALLY THAN IN ANY OTHER FORM OF SYMBOLIC EXPRESSION, THAT LANGUAGE AND CULTURE COME TOGETHER AND DISPLAY THEIR FUNDAMENTAL INSEPARABILITY. A THEORY OF ONE THAT EXCLUDES THE OTHER WILL INEVITABLY DO DAMAGE TO BOTH.

Moreover, by offering new ways of looking at things, metaphor enriches the cultural models. Thus, metaphor and cultural models move into a new circle of mutual influence. In this paper, we firstly focus on the conceptualizations of such cultural models as time and emotions that are metaphorically constituted. Then we move on to the point that cultural models determine the manifestation of metaphor in language. Finally, we intend to prove that metaphor and cultural models interact with each other, thus pushing them both forward.

1. Metaphorical Cultural Models

According to Naomi Quinn, cultural models are “presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are popularly shared by the members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of that world and their behavior in it” (Quinn/Holland 1987: 4). In both English and Chinese, the linguistic evidence shows that some cultural models are metaphorically conceptualized.

1.1 Metaphors on temporal concepts

1.1.1 Time as space metaphors

Space and time have been “the subjects of serious study down the ages. From ancient days to modern times, philosophers and scientists have spoken or written extensively on the subjects from different standpoints, although no final conclusion or consensus has been reached” (Ning Yu 1998: 83). However, one thing is clear, that is space and time are concepts very tightly interwoven with each other. They are so closely tied to each other that the coordinate phrase is sometimes reduced to a coordinate compound, such as “space-time” in English and “时空” in Chinese. Despite the fact that space and time are treated as parallel conceptually and linguistically, they do not seem to stand on a completely equal footing. That is, temporal concepts are always expressed metaphorically via spatial concepts, not vice versa.

Time as space in English

Lakoff (1990, 1993, 1994) has noticed that time in English is conceptualized in terms of space. That is, the understanding of time can be reached by the

human being's experiencing of space. It gives rise to a lot of temporal metaphors such as (Lakoff 1993):

(1) Time passing is motion of an object

- a. *Thanksgiving is coming up on us.*
- b. *Time is flying by.*
- c. *The time has passed when...*
- d. *It's getting closer to bedtime.*
- e. *Christmas is around the corner.*
- f. *If winter comes, can spring be far behind?*

(2) Time passing is motion over a landscape

- a. *We're coming up on Christmas.*
- b. *We're getting close to Christmas.*

The above examples are instances of mappings from the space domain onto the time domain under the central conceptual metaphor TIME PASSING IS MOTION in English. They show how abstract inferences of time are actually metaphorical versions of spatial inferences, which can be summarized by a single conceptual metaphor.

Time as space in Chinese

In Chinese, the lexical items in the time domain are also systematically conceptualized via motion in space. For example, in Chinese, there are phrases like:

(3)

- a. 春天来临。(The spring is coming.)
- b. 冬天过去。(The winter has passed.)
- c. 二十一世纪到来了。(The 21st century arrives.)

On the other hand, Chinese temporal metaphors differ from those in English in that, firstly, a great number of temporal concepts are understood via the Chinese localizers such as “上”(above, up) and “下”(below, down), “前”(front, ahead) and “后”(after, behind, back), which does not occur so often in English:

- (4) 上
a. 上半年 (the first half of the year)
b. 上个月 (last month)
c. 上半夜 (before midnight)
- (5) 下
a. 下半年 (the second half of the year)
b. 下个月 (next month)
c. 下半夜 (after midnight)
- (6) 前
a. 几年前 (several years ago)
b. 午饭前 (before lunch)
c. 春节前 (before Spring Festival)
d. 前辈 (ascendant)
- (7) 后
a. 几年后 (a few years later)
b. 午饭后 (after lunch)
c. 春节后 (after Spring Festival)
d. 后代 (descendant)

It is noted that in the above examples, all the spatial concepts indicating upper part or front of an object are used to refer to earlier time, such as “上” (above or upper), “前” (before), while those indicating lower part or bottom of an object to later time, such as “下” (below or under), “后” (back). Besides, Chinese language also offers examples of combining localizers such as “上” and “下”, “前” and “后”, and sometimes even “左” (right) and “右” (left) to refer to time concepts.

- (8) 前后
a. 春节前后 (during the Spring Festival)
b. 这项工程从动工到完成前后仅用了半年时间。(This project, from the day it was launched to the day it was completed, takes only half a year.)
- (9) 上下
孩子考上大学, 全家上上下下都很高兴。(The child was accepted by a university, the whole family, old and young, are extremely pleased.)
- (10) 左右
年纪在 30 岁左右 (about 30 years old)

Secondly, body-part terms, or body-part terms together with spatial terms, are

used in temporal understanding in Chinese, which also seldom occurs in English. For instance:

(11)

- a. 月头儿 (the beginning of a month)
- b. 年头儿 (the beginning of a year)

(12)

- a. 我们不能只顾眼前, 不顾将来。 (We must not think of the present and neglect the future.)
- b. 目前是农忙季节。 (Now it is the busy season in farming.)

By saying that the localizers, or localizers together with body-part terms are more often used in Chinese does not mean that they are not used in English at all. The problem is that they are not as abundant in English as in Chinese. For example, in English, there are phrases like “afternoon”, “look forward into the future”, “look back into the past” etc., while the body-part terms are seldom found to refer to temporal concepts in English.

It is argued that this spatial conceptualization of time may be due to our cognitive correspondences between spatial and temporal concepts which are actually based on our bodily experience in the physical world. As humans, according to Ning Yu (1998: 111), “we have upright or vertical bodies, with our heads up and feet down. When we lie down on stomach, we normally move in the direction of head rather than feet. So our heads become fronts just like the fronts of any moving objects, such as cars, trains, planes, and so forth. Moreover, the fronts of moving objects usually pass a particular point in space first, thus they are earlier in time than backs”. This argument is true to some extent. However, in Chinese we also use the “front” concept to refer to a later time — future, as in “前途 (front road)” (future), which is contradictory to this argument. Of course, contradiction can always be found in any discussion.

In spite of the diverse differences, one thing is clear. That is, such a commonly used concept of time is understood metaphorically via spatial concepts, not vice versa. This asymmetrical relationship between the twin notions of space and time is evidenced by the sequence of their development in human history in general, and in individual growth in particular. In human history, according to Akhundov (1986) (quote from Ning Yu 1998: 85), the conceptions of spatial relations are developed far earlier than those of temporal relations; in the

process of individual growth, the conceptions of spatial relations are again acquired before those of temporal relations. Another reason for this asymmetrical relationship is that we can actually see and touch space, but not time. This asymmetrical relationship between the twin notions reflects our conceptual pattern of understanding the abstract or not-easy-to-access concepts metaphorically via the concrete or easy-to-access concepts.

1.1.2 Time as money metaphor

In Western society, with the development of modern industries, people realize that they can produce more products if they make good use of time, which will lead to more money or profits in return. This experience of industrial life gives rise to the now commonly accepted conceptual model of “time is money”, which further gives rise to a system of new metaphors in modern Western culture.

(13) Time is money

- a. You are **wasting** my time.
- b. That flat tire **cost** me an hour.
- c. I've **invested** a lot of time in her.
- d. You're **running out of** time.
- e. You need to **budget** your time.
- f. You don't use your time **profitably**.

(Lakoff/Johnson 1980:7-8)

Comparatively speaking, all these metaphorical expressions are new in modern times and they provide a new way of looking at the time concept, which reflects the dynamic property of both cultural models and metaphors.

In Chinese, we have an ancient saying that “一寸光阴一寸金，寸金难买寸光阴”，in which the concept of time is metaphorically expressed via precious gold, a hard currency. However, the original gold-related concept of time had nothing to do with commercial industry or exchange. It originated from the traditional Chinese virtue of “学而优则仕”，which means to study assiduously to be qualified to take office in the official-oriented Chinese society. On the other hand, this ancient saying has got new interpretations in modern times, that is, “时间就是金钱”，which is completely the same with the English correspondent “time is money”.

From the above two paragraphs, it is obvious that in modern times, people usually look at time metaphorically to express its value in the present world. By saying so, I do not mean that this is the only way for human beings to conceptualize time. It is true to Chinese culture and Western culture. It must also be true that there are cultures where time is metaphorically understood via other objects. With the increasing popularity of English as a world language, the metaphor “time is money” will definitely be felt by more cultures in the world.

1.2 Emotion metaphors

Emotion metaphors in English

In English, extensive studies have been made on the function of metaphor in the conceptualization of emotions — one of the most central and pervasive aspects of human experience (Fesmire 1994, Kövecses 1986, 1988, 1990a, 1990b, 1991, Lakoff/Johnson 1980, Lakoff/Kövecses 1987). A central claim of these studies is that human emotions, which are abstract in nature, thus elusive and transient, are to a great extent conceptualized and expressed via metaphor grounded in bodily experiences. Given the limit of time and efforts, the current discussion of emotion metaphor is mainly focused on anger metaphors. For example, there are anger metaphors in English as follows:

- (14) Anger is a hot fluid in a container.
- a. *His pent-up anger **welled up** inside of him.*
 - b. *Jim's just **blowing off** steam*
 - c. *He was **bursting with** anger.*
 - d. *She **blew up** at me.*
- (15) Anger is fire
- a. *She is doing a **slow burn**.*
 - b. *He is **burning with** anger.*
 - c. *The insincere apology **added fuel to the fire**.*

According to Gibbs (1996), central to human beings' understanding of the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS HEATED FLUID IN A CONTAINER is the “direct physical experience” of containment. People have strong kinesthetic experiences of bodily containment, ranging from situations in which their bodies are in and out of containers (such as bathtubs, beds, rooms or houses), to experience of their bodies as containers where substances enter and exit. An

important part of bodily containment is the experience of bodies being filled with liquids, including stomach fluids, blood and sweat. These various, recurring bodily experiences are metaphorically elaborated in a large number of abstract domains of experience (e.g. concepts about emotions, the mind, linguistic meaning, moral obligations, and social institutions). For instance, the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS HEATED FLUID IN A CONTAINER takes the image schema for CONTAINMENT as part of its source domain and maps this image-schematic structure onto anger, which gives rise to a number of interesting entailments. Thus, people know that when the intensity of anger increases, the fluid in the container rises (e.g. his pent-up anger welled up inside him), that intense heat produces steam and this creates pressure in the container (e.g. Bill is getting hot under the collar, Jim's just blowing off steam, and He was bursting with anger), and that when the pressure of the container becomes too high, the container explodes (e.g. She blew up at me). So is the case with "Anger is fire" metaphor. Thus, it can be said that without the metaphorical mapping of bodily containment and fire experience onto anger experience, it would be extremely difficult to explain the anger concepts. Moreover, it is important to point out that the "fire" and "hot fluid" anger metaphors in English are unified under the general concept metaphor "anger is heat".

Emotion metaphors in Chinese

While the above-mentioned argument is based on the evidences founded in English, it is actually true to the emotion metaphors in Chinese. For example, in Chinese we have anger metaphors as the following:

- (16) 生气是火 (anger is fire)
- a. 别惹我发火! (Don't cause me to lose my temper.)
 - b. 他大动肝火。 (He flew into a rage.)
 - c. 他心头火起。 (He flared up with anger.)
 - d. 他是火性子。 (He is easy to lose temper.)

The interesting thing is that, under the general metaphorical concept of "Anger is heat", there is a concept of "Anger is gas in a container", instead of "Anger is a hot fluid in a container", in Chinese:

- (17) 生气是气 (Anger is gas in a container.)
- a. 她脾气很大。 (She is hot-tempered.)

- b. 她憋了一肚子气。 (She was filled up with pent-up anger.)
- c. 他正在气头上。 (He is at the top of his anger.)
- d. 他气鼓鼓的。 (He's inflated with anger.)
- e. 他拿我出气。 (He vented his anger on me.)

It is obvious that there are metaphorical concepts of “Anger is heat” in both English and Chinese, thus, the author believes that the physical effects of anger might be universal among all human beings, because all cultures are built around biological, psychological, and social characteristics common to all mankind. However, we have “Anger is gas in a container” metaphor in Chinese; English has “Anger is a hot fluid in a container”. This diversity indicates cultural models do come in and influence the selection of linguistic expressions for a particular physical experience. This is what is going to be talked about in the next part.

Thus far, we can see that, though sometimes different in linguistic manifestations, cultural models, especially abstract ones, are basically conceptualized metaphorically. Or to put it another way, metaphor plays an indispensable role in the constitution of cultural models.

2. Cultural Models as Filters

Ning Yu (1998:43) points out, though metaphors are grounded in our embodied experience, the “bodily experience can only tell what possible metaphors are. Whether these potential metaphors are actually selected in a given culture is largely dependent upon the cultural models shared by individuals living in this culture”. In other words, cultural models function as filters in the selection of metaphors. Particular metaphors are selected by speakers, and are favored by these speakers, just because they provide satisfying mappings onto already existing cultural understandings. As it shows in the former section that though the experience of “Anger is heat” is common both in English and in Chinese, one of its subversions takes on different looks in these two languages. That is, it takes the appearance of “Anger is gas” in Chinese, while “Anger is a hot fluid in a container” in English. Ning Yu explains the difference by referring to the theories of Chinese medicine—which form cognitive or cultural models underlying the metaphorical conceptualization in Chinese. According to traditional Chinese

medicine, the human body is composed of three basic substances: 气 (gas), 血 (blood), and 体液 (fluids other than blood), which serve as the basis for the function of the organs, tissues, and so forth. The so-called “气” is “the moving but invisible, nutritive substance which functions as the motive power for the physiological movement of internal organs” (Chen 1989b:1010) (quote from Ning Yu 1998:71). Whenever 气 is locally impeded, it will affect the circulation of blood and local pain may occur as a result of increased internal pressure in that area. The causes for the impediment of circulation of 气 are various, but negative emotions, such as anger, are believed to be the most significant one, as is expressed in the phrase “气大伤身” (rages do harm to health).

From this example, we can see the reason why “气” is chosen over “水” in Chinese anger metaphors: it is the cultural models that make themselves felt; or to put it another way, metaphors are selected out to fit pre-existing cultural models. In what follows, the author will have a close look at the cultural preference for certain metaphors. The objective is to make a comparative study of the different linguistic manifestations of metaphors in English and Chinese, thus proving that the result of the culture-selecting metaphors must be reflected in the choice for what I.A. Richards (1936) calls “tenor” and “vehicle” in a metaphor. And the observation of data from both English and Chinese shows that there are two ways in which cultural models select metaphors.

2.1 Metaphors determined by cultural universalities

In both English and Chinese, there are a large number of metaphors with the same tenors or vehicles or both. In other words, the tenor or vehicle or both are totally correspondent with each other across the linguistic boundary of English and Chinese. Look at the following examples:

(18) Body parts

- a. The **head** of the department = 这个部门的头
- b. At the **foot** of the mountain = 山脚下
- c. The **mouth** of the cave = 洞口
- d. The **neck** of a bottle = 瓶颈
- e. The **legs** of a table = 桌腿

(19) General ecological features

- a. *The love of money is the **root** of all evil* = 金钱乃万恶之根源
- b. *a **ray** of hope* = 一线希望
- c. *as though **skating on thin ice*** = 如履薄冰
- d. ***thunderous** applause* = 雷鸣般的掌声
- e. *the daughter has made friend with a **bad egg*** = 女儿和坏蛋交上了朋友
- f. *a **sweet** girl* = 甜妞

(20) Kinship

- a. *the **father** of literature* = 文学之父
- b. ***mother** tongue* = 母语
- c. *art **lovers*** = 艺术的爱人
- d. ***twin** cities* = 姊妹城市

(21) Human activities

- a. *There is always a lot of **maneuverings behind the scenes** before a new government is formed.* = 新一届政府组成以前总是有很多幕后操作。
- b. *You are my **walking dictionary**.* = 你是我会走路的字典。

The complete correspondence between certain tenors and vehicles indicates that there are important similarities in these two cultures, perhaps in all cultures — similarities that, in Harry Hoijer's (1974:122) words, stem from the fact that "all cultures are built around biological, psychological, and social characteristics common to all mankind". In other words, as human beings, we all share and experience basically the same physical world, and we are all driven by the genetically determined cognitive faculties of eating, seeing and feeling, or doing things. These commonly shared experiences gives rise to cognitive universals as well as cultural universals and these universals are reflected in metaphors arising from them. That is, they give rise to the same manifestations of tenors and vehicles of metaphors in different cultural models.

2.2 Metaphors determined by cultural relativity

As I have shown that human understanding and reasoning are grounded in our embodied experience, and since basic bodily experience should be common among all human beings, it can be concluded that there exist cognitive universals, as well as cultural universals, which are reflected in metaphors arising thereby. On the other hand, as Ning Yu (1998:47) points out, "since bodily experience always interacts with specific physical, social, and

cultural environments”, it is also expected that there should be cognitive variations across cultures and languages, and these variations are instantiated in metaphors with the following features.

2.2.1 Differentiation of tenor vs. vehicle relationship

Comparing the metaphors in English and in Chinese, it is not difficult to find out that there are metaphors whose tenors are the same, but expressed by different vehicles. For instance:

(22)

- a. *He met his Waterloo.*
- b. 他处于四面楚歌的境地。

(23)

- a. *He is a Monday morning quarterback.*
- b. 他是事后诸葛亮。

In (22), the tenor, implied in the sentences, is failure. In English, it is expressed with the vehicle of Waterloo, a place where Napoleon I met his fatal defeat. But in Chinese, it is expressed with the vehicle of “四面楚歌”, a concept originated from the war between Chu and Han — two warring states in ancient China. During the war, Xiang Yu, the overlord of Chu, was driven into a desperate state and defeated by Liu Bang, the overlord of Han. The story of Napoleon I gradually come to be a shared cultural heritage in the western countries, while the story of Xiang Yu become a part of cultural heritage in China. Thus, the same concept of “fatal defeat” is expressed metaphorically with different vehicles in English and in Chinese. In the similar vein, football is a popular sport in the west, and it is usually held on Sundays. In a football match, the quarterback functions as a general commanding an army. If a team loses, on Monday morning, at work, those who are knowledgeable about the game will say, “in a certain crucial situation, the quarterback should have called for a pass rather than opting to run with the ball”. Thus, the expression “Monday morning quarterback” is usually regarded as being pejorative because Monday morning quarterback has no real qualifications to fill the role. And in Chinese culture, Zhu Geliang (诸葛亮), a statesman and strategist in the Three Kingdoms (220-280 AD), is well known for being insightful and resourceful. However, if Zhu Geliang only provides some comments or

suggestions afterwards, he does nothing to solve the problem, hence, no qualification to be a strategist or master. This leads to the use of different vehicles to refer to the same tenor “people of no qualification” in the metaphors in (23). From these two examples, we can see that though metaphors reflect the commonalities of human experience, they are at the same time interact with different cultural realities, thus we have metaphors with the same tenors expressed by different vehicles in English and Chinese.

Another manifestation of tenor vs. vehicle relationship is to use the same vehicles expressing different tenors. The reason for this is that, as human beings, we share a lot of things in the world, such as the same ecological features of raining and thundering, or same animals like tiger, horse, and chicken. However, different cultural realities give those commonly shared things different associated meanings. When these differently associated meanings are used in metaphors, we have metaphors with the same vehicles but different tenors. Let’s turn to the following examples:

(24)

- a. *He is a real **dragon**; you had better keep away from him.* (from Wu Ping 2001)
- b. *这是家龙头企业。* (This is a leading enterprise.)

(25)

- a. *You are a **lucky dog**.*
- b. *痛打落水狗。* (Beat soundly the drowning dog.)

Both English and Chinese cultures share those animals like dragons, dogs, and bears, etc., while different cultural models give these animals differently associated meanings in these two languages. For example, dragon is regarded as a national totem in China, and it always carries the feeling of admirations. So, in (24:b), when Chinese use dragon to refer to an enterprise, it indicates that this enterprise is very good, and it functions as a model in the field. While in English, dragon is believed to be a fierce and violent monster that always spouts evil fire. When it is metaphorically used to refer to a person, it means that this person is fierce and violent, or evil, which is the implied meaning of (24:a). From this, we can see that it is the differently shared knowledge of the animal dragon in these two languages that gives rise to its differently associated meanings: symbol of goodness and happiness in Chinese, while that of evilness or violence in English. Similarly, dog is a pet animal in English

culture, so it always carries tender feelings of love and affection as in (25:a). But in Chinese, though the dog sometimes functions as faithful doorkeepers, it is in most times suffering from bad reputation of being snobbish and obnoxious, so it becomes the target of righteous man. That is why Lu Xun uses the title “痛打落水狗” in his essay to attack the reactionaries. The reason for this difference is due to the different cultural models.

2.2.2 Linguistic bound metaphors

While we say cultural realities select metaphors, the result might be metaphors with the same tenors expressed by different vehicles, or the ones with the same vehicles but different intended meanings. These two are illustrated in details in the above paragraphs. Besides this, there exists another type of culture-selecting manifestation of metaphors, that is, some vehicles appear only in one language, but absent in others. The reason for this is that the different cultural frameworks nurture unique ways of looking at things or reasoning. In Chinese, for example, Mount Tai is one of the Five Sacred Mountains (the Eastern Mountain—Mount Tai in Shandong Province, the Southern Mountain — Mount Heng (衡山) in Hunan Province, the Western Mountain—Mount Hua in Shaanxi Province, the Northern Mountain—Mount Heng (恒山) in Shanxi Province, and the Central Mountain—Mount Song in Henan Province) which are of vital importance in Chinese culture. Furthermore, east is always favored over other directions, so Mount Tai - the eastern Mountain - is of the greatest importance among the five. Based on this cultural reality, Mount Tai is often used as a symbol of great weight or importance, as in (26):

(26) 小人有眼不识泰山！一时冒犯兄长，望乞恕罪（《水浒传》）。(You are as famous as Mount Tai, but I failed to recognize you. I hope that you will forgive me for that blunder.)

Due to the importance of Mount Tai, the star over it enjoys great brightness, hence, importance, as in (27):

(27) 他是中国文学史的泰斗。(He is as eminent as the star over Mount Tai—he is the foremost figure in Chinese Literature.)

In the above two examples, both Mount Tai and the star over it are metaphorically used to refer to persons of great importance or eminence. This

metaphorical use of Mount Tai only exists in Chinese, for it is unique in Chinese culture.

In the same vein, there are metaphorically used concepts which are specific to English, as in “Geometry is his Achilles’ heel”. In this sentence, “Achilles’ heel” is used as the vehicle of the tenor “the weak or vulnerable point of a person (organization, country, etc.)”, and this metaphorical use does not exist in Chinese. This is due to the fact that the phrase “Achilles’ heel”, originating from Greek epic — an important constituting part of western culture. Since English and Chinese do not share the same cultural origins, the metaphorical use of “Achilles’ heel” does not exist in Chinese.

From these examples, it is not difficult to notice that it is cultural specific models that determine vehicles which exist only in certain languages. And it is this kind of cultural-specific metaphors that cause the highest degree of difficulty in cross-cultural understanding.

3. Interaction of Metaphor and Cultural Models

From the above two sections, it is obvious to see the relationship between metaphor and cultural models: each cannot exist without the other. Metaphor is an important constituting part of cultural models, and cultural models select the instantiation of metaphors. However, it is, like the egg and chicken argument, difficult to tell which comes first and which comes second. Furthermore, metaphor and cultural models always interact with each other, and this interaction leads to their mutual growth. In other words, metaphors, especially novel metaphors, possess the natural ability to enrich cultural models; while on the other hand, cultural models give rise to novel metaphors, thus, leading the growth of the two to spiraling upward. In the following, we will examine this interaction process in details.

Firstly, metaphors, especially novel metaphors, have the potentiality to provide fresh blood for our ways of thinking and reasoning, and may thus change our conceptual perspective of looking at things. According to Roger Tourangeau (1982:32), a novel metaphor may be novel in several senses: It may be phrased in an original way; it may offer an original view of its subjects; or it may make us see the relations between two domains in a new way. So,

novel metaphors include not only those newly born, but also the conventional ones used in an original way and the ones provide us a new perspective of looking at the world. Take the Chinese sentence “牵挂你一生，爱戴你一世” (Shu Dingfang 2000:89), as an example. Judging from the first sight, it is quite possible to come to the conclusion that it is a vow made to the beloved one. However, it is actually an advertisement for gold jewelry. Understanding this background, the readers are impressed by the novelty and creativeness of the metaphorical use of “牵挂” and “爱戴”, whose literal meaning are “to worry about, or care” and “to respect” respectively, while they are now used to refer to the act of putting on the gold jewels and the affection arising from it. This way of novelty belongs to the first type of Tourangeau’s new metaphor. It is novel because it gives the conventional words new blood. Another example is Black’s metaphor “marriage is a zero-sum game” (Black 1979:29). Black takes the metaphor to mean that marriage is a sustained competition between two contestants, and in this competition the rewards of one can only be obtained at the expense of the other. This metaphor is novel in two ways. First, as a view that most of us would prefer to reject, it contradicts many of our beliefs about marriage. Second, it forces us to package our beliefs about marriage according to a new structure, the structure of games. Thus, the once life-long partners now become competitors in a game; and the compromise in marriage that was once thought cooperative is now regarded as competitive. The novelty of metaphors, to conclude with the words of Lakoff and Johnson (1980:140), is “capable of giving us a new understanding of our experience. Thus, they can give new meaning to our pasts, to our daily activity, and to what we know and believe”. Put it another way, novel metaphors give us a new conceptual framework of the world we live in.

Moreover, as a way of structuring our conceptual system, novel metaphors also have the capability to create new realities, including new cultural realities. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980:145) commented, much of cultural change “arises from the introduction of new metaphorical concepts and the loss of old ones.” The creative function of metaphor comes to be felt when we begin to understand our experience in terms of the new metaphors and when we begin to act accordingly. Also take the metaphor “marriage is a zero-sum game” as an example. When this metaphor enters the conceptual system that we base

our actions on, we came to structure marriage in terms of games, and act accordingly. Thus, the once romantic love journey ends with success or defeat; the once unselfish devotion for happy marriage is replaced by equality between two partners. More and more couples even resort to contracts about the respective share of housework, baby-sitting, salary earning, etc. In this way, the marriage model takes the form of a game or business model, either of which is different from the one before.

On the other hand, when the new marriage model comes to be accepted by the public, it further gives rise to series of novel metaphors. For example, in the game-modeled society, the once happy marriage is now called “boarding the pirate ship” (上了贼船), and the life-long partners “destined foes” or “opponents” (冤家) etc. This mutual enrichment of metaphor and cultural models leads to the spiraled growth of the two.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed the relationship between metaphor and cultural models in details. From this, we can see the relationship is not that of one dominant over the other, but that of mutual promotion and constraint. It is so because cultural models, especially the abstract ones, are not free of metaphor, while on the other hand, cultural models play a significant role in selecting and shaping metaphors; moreover, new metaphors have the power to create new models. Or in Ning Yu's words (1998:82), “culture plays a role in shaping metaphor” and in return, metaphor plays a role in constituting and creating culture.

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DOI: 10.17185/duepublico/83761

URN: urn:nbn:de:hbz:465-20250723-094721-9

Published in: *metaphorik.de* No. 17 (2009), pp. 115-134

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