

Research on Sadness Metaphors of Wei Cheng by Chung-shu Ch'ien

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Abstract: Ch'ien Chungshu's novel Wei Cheng is well-known for its witty satire and rhetoric language. This paper focuses on the sadness metaphor analysis by means of conceptual metaphor theory and Conceptual Metonymy Theory, trying to prove cognitive universality and cultural diversity of the metaphors in Chinese novel.

1. Introduction

The history of metaphor can be traced back more than two thousand years. And it can be divided into three main periods concerning about its research scope and methodology, namely, Aristotle's comparison theory, Quintilian's substitution theory and Richard's interaction theory as well. All these traditional views share an ordinary feature: all of them regard metaphor as a linguistic phenomenon and a figure of speech, and assume a basic difference between literal and figurative senses. Among these, the interaction view has recognized the cognitive value of metaphor and paved the way for the appearance of a new cognitive approach serving as the focus of contemporary views of metaphor as well.

2. Conceptual metaphors and Metaphor Systems

2.1 Conceptual metaphor theory

Conceptual metaphor theory was first presented by Cognitive linguists Lakoff and Johnson in their great work *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980. They regard CMT as a kind of visible or secret mechanism dominating all kinds of concepts around the world. Therefore the daily language people use is attitudinally metaphorical, and metaphor becomes the way we live by. With regard to the internal structure and working mechanism of metaphor, Conceptual metaphor can be classified into three general types-orientation metaphors, ontological metaphors and structural metaphors based on the different source domain they called upon. Lakoff and Turner think conceptual metaphor includes two domains: source domains and target domains. The source domains are usually more concrete or physical and more clearly delineated concepts, mostly from the physical world while the target domains are fairly Abstract and less delineated ones. The source domain for orientation metaphors is space which has to do with basic human spatial orientation: up-down, in-out, front-back, on-off, deep-shallow, and central-peripheral. These concrete spatial concepts are mapped onto Abstract and non-spatial concepts. Ontological metaphors view events, activities, emotions, etc. as entities and substances. The most obvious ontological metaphors are those where the physical object is further specified as being a person, namely personification. Orientation metaphors and ontological metaphors can be elaborated into structural metaphors.

2.2 Conceptual Metonymy Theory

Equally significant "trope" as metaphor, conceptual metonymy theory plays an important role in the course of interpretation of emotion concepts. Unlike conceptual metaphors, it involves a single domain, a concept. The purpose is to provide mental access to a domain through a part of the same domain. That is to say, metonymy is a "stand for" relation (a part stands for the whole or a part stands for another part) within a single domain.

The traditional conceptual metonymy theory views that the feature of metonymy is expressed by the claim that two entities are contiguously related or the two entities are in each other's proximity.

However, the cognitive linguists suggest that a vehicle entity can provide mental access to target entity when the two entities belong to the same domain. And Lakoff and Johnson mentions “metonymy is not merely a referential device; it also serves the function of providing understanding”. For instance, while people talk about the concept of emotion, they are thinking of its relations to physiological effects or behavior reactions because the influence of the metonymical principle. In this sense, metonymy is no longer the rhetorical device but part of the ordinary everyday way we think, act and talk.

3. Introduction to Wei Cheng and the Author

Being regarded as one of the foremost Chinese cultural masters and novelists, Ch’ien Chung-shu’s novel Wei Cheng has been acclaimed as one of the greatest modern Chinese novels. Published in 1980 the novel was made into a TV series in late 20th century and entered millions of families at home and abroad.

3.1 Introduction to the Author

As a great satirist and a master of language, Zhongshu Qian’s language is full of witty satire and rhetoric, such as personification, symbolism, presupposition, verbal paradoxes, narrator intrusion, oxymoron and synecdoche which make his work more popular. The following part will introduce this novel in detail. Regardless of a comedy with numerous humors, satire, profound wisdom and unique insight into human nature, it is also a scholar’s satire commentary novel on courtship and marriage and a study of one kind of contemporary man.

3.2 Introduction to Wei Cheng

Chinese novel Wei Cheng begins with Fang Hung-chien’s return from Europe in 1937 followed by his experience in Shanghai where he works, Wuhsi where he lives and San Lv University in which he receives a teaching position. His entanglement with three women serves as the main line of the whole story. It ends with his loss of job and dissolutions of his marriage. Composed of nine chapters, it can be divided into four sections. Among them, the author lays stress on the hero’s experiences from hope to defeat by the way of frustration. Each section is filled with hope, frustration and defeat.

The novel is rich in metaphors of emotions, which are embodied in different basic emotion terms, including desire, happiness, love, curiosity, fear, sadness, ennui, displeasure, jealousy, shame. Based on this, this thesis in a broad way classifies the emotion metaphors into positive emotion metaphors and negative emotion metaphors, and then reclassifies them respectively based on Martin’s way of classification. The following English versions are all taken from Fortress Besieged(2009) translated by Jeanne Kelly and Nathan K. Mao and the corresponding Chinese sentences are all from original work published in 2008 which seem a bit different from English.

4. Conceptual metonymy of sadness in Wei Cheng

Opposite to the happiness feeling, Sadness is a kind of unhappy feeling. can find some similar source domains to happiness. And thus the concept of happiness is expressed with up-words or phrases, while the concept of sadness with down-words or phrases. So words like low, fall and down, etc. to convey the emotion of sadness are usually found in the following instances.

4.1 Orientation metaphors---Sadness is down

(1)But she remained in low spirits. (2)Hung-chien’s heart sank irretrievably. (3)Hung-chien’s heart gave such a heavy thump that it sounded like a package hitting the grounds when cargo is being unloaded from a truck. These spatial words to indicate emotion is not for random. They are closely related to people’s bodily experience. Human beings have upright posture and they project posture onto understanding of emotions. The positive emotion, such as happiness is characterized by erect posture, whereas the opposite, such as sadness is related to a drooping posture.

4.2 Ontological Metaphor

4.2.1 Sadness is dark

(4)Dark clouds had already formed in the sky, disclosing here and there a few stars. (5)Having received a thorough blackening from Miss Pao, he could hardly go on.(6)The storm sounded like a man greedily gulping his food, the broad open sea of the daytime had now been completely digested in the even vaster night. Contrary to happiness metaphor depicted in terms of light, sadness is conceptualized as dark with words like “dark”, “gloom” and “dismal”. They are also closely related to bodily experience. That is to say, once a person is controlled by emotion, his body temperature will go up or down accompanied by his complexion. Therefore it is no surprise that when a person is in a state of sadness, his complexion loses brightness and eyes becomes dimmer.

4.2.2 Sadness is autumn

(7)I’ve of late been very restless and fitful, experiencing little joy and much grief. A feeling of ‘autumnal melancholy’ has suddenly possessed me. (8)Though you make excuses about “autumnal melancholy”, I know full well that what ails you are the “yearnings of springtime”. In traditional Chinese culture, the dreariness of autumn usually brings sadness to people, thus creating many conventional expressions of sadness in Chinese. It is related to Chinese Five Elements and traditional medicine, which will be explained in the following part.

4.2.3 Sadness is taste

(9)Catching the insinuations behind their remarks, Li’s heart turned as sour as the juice from a green plum. (10)Hung-chien, feeling envious and left out, would make sarcastic remarks. (11)As she watched, her heart melted into bitter water. This metaphor is a little bit like LOVE IS VINEGAR in some respects. Western people prefer olive and salt in choosing cooking ingredient while Chinese people do vinegar and salt. So the first two “as sour as the juice from a green plum” “心里作酸”(sour disturbs in the heart) take sour as the source domain and the third bitter. In Chinese people’s life “五味盐作总,调料醋当先”(salt and vinegar are the primary consideration in cooking) is commonly expressed.

4.2.4 Sadness is animal’s behavior

(12)Left without aid or resistance, he let the pain of his affliction nibble and gnaw at his heart. (13)Now, like a cow chewing its cud, he chewed up in bits and pieces the deep, bottomless aftertaste. This metaphor is concerned with traditional Chinese culture. Ancient China is a traditional agricultural country where men labor mainly in the field and women are responsible for weaving and raising children. At that time, cattle serves as the most important farming tool for men while silkworm or cotton produce thread for women weaving materials to cover the naked body or resist the coldness. So the cattle’s chewing and the silkworm’s bite on food are taken to stand for sadness.

4.2.5 Sadness is unfavorable natural environment

(14)The loneliness in the crowds and the desolateness amidst all the excitement made him feel like many other people living on this solitary island. His mental state too was like a solitary, isolated island. (15)Hung-chien’s nerves were too numb as he left the house to feel the cold...his thoughts churned chaotically in his brain like snowflakes whirling about in the north wind. (16)Dark clouds had already formed in the sky, disclosing here and there a few stars. The storm sounded like a man greedily gulping his food, the broad open sea of the daytime had now been completely digested in the even vaster night.

Cognitive linguistics presents that concrete natural phenomenon are often employed to depict the Abstract emotion. For instance, bright sunshine and gentle breeze are usually associated with happiness and comfort inside and heavy fogs, dark cloud, grey color brings depression and restlessness. Here in his work, the author lends the solitary islands, out-of-date timepiece and snowflakes to describe the hero’s sadness state.

4.2.6 Sadness is disease

(17)Hung-chien's mind and body went numb as though an electric current had passed through him....it was as though his mind were covered with a layer of oilpaper, and his words were like raindrops. Though they couldn't soak through the oilpaper, it still shook under the beating rain. Traditional Chinese medicine regards lung as an organ container for breathing in and out Qi(gas), which includes the gas in respiratory tract and the gas which means the vital energy or energy of life. So when lung and heart, important organs in the body, are hurt, the person will be in great pain or danger.

4.2.7 Sadness is the fluid in a container

(18)Fang's face was grave and sorrow-ridden; Inwardly he felt ashamed.(19)Full of misgivings, hung-chien went back to his office. (20)All year he had been full of complaints, which could be set off at the slightest aggravation.

Sadness is the fluid in a container is a specific-level instantiation of the general metaphor Emotions are fluids in a container which can be explained as follows: every human body is a container, with a bounding surface distinguishing the interior and exterior. The capacity of the container indicates the emotions one can control while the pouring out of the liquids refers to the release of the emotions. “满心惭愧”(shame full of heart), “满肚子怨气”(complaints full of belly) and other expressions show that Chinese uses more internal organs such as heart and belly as container than English does.

5. Conceptual metonymy of sadness

There are many physiological reactions of sadness appeared in Wei Cheng such as tears/weeping/crying, reactions in facial complexion and silence. And they can be explained in the following.

6. Physiological effects of sadness stand for sadness

6.1 Tears/weeping/crying

(1)He raised his eyes, his eyes brimmed with tears like a big child who has been spanked and scolded-a face in which the tears have been swallowed into the heart.(2)It seemed the tide of tears didn't flow from her eyes only, but it was as if hot tears were being squeezed from her heart and all over her body and drained out together.

6.2 Organ-related reaction

(3)She became so despondent he might get over by an automobile car.

6.3 Reactions in facial complexion

(4)Her face flushed as red as the comb on a fighting cock.

6.4 Silence

(5)Hung-chien returned dejectedly to his room. A rare moment of high spirits had to be ruined by a friend.

The above conceptual metonymy of sadness mainly employs particular organs heart and soul which represented a close relationship with human emotions, because Chinese culture takes heart as the center of all emotions. Also such emotions are often imposed on facial organs---eyebrows, face. This is mainly because psychological responses are often reflected on human's emotions. For instance they use “heart hurts” to depict sadness and “heart leaps” happiness. Here the difference lies in that the author uses “失魂落魄” (loss of hun and po)to express sadness which is relevant to Chinese culture because people in ancient China believe the independent existence of the ghosts.

7. Conclusion

In brief, the above sadness metaphor analysis of Chinese novel *Wei Cheng* further proves the cognitive universalities and cultural diversity of the metaphors. It proves that conceptual metaphor theory is basically conceptual and derived from people's bodily and physiological experience, the conceptual metaphors of emotions in different languages can be identical. On the one hand Chinese also employs space, structure and entity to stand for emotions, which is similar to English, on the other hand, the conceptual metonymy of emotions confirms that different people with different language background mainly resort to similar physiological and behavior characteristics---body movements or gestures, body heats, internal pressure increases, face or neck flushes and organs' proper function when he or she is in the same kind of emotional state. There are some different and distinctive target domains emotions which are attributable to cultural relativity and precisely the author's subjectivity.

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