

A Contrastive Analysis of Emotional Metaphors “Joy (Happiness)” and “Anger” in Chinese and English

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Abstract

In today's society, emotion is considered as the central and most pervasive aspect of human experience (Zoltan Kovecses, 1986). Thus, how to conceptualize emotion is always an issue of concern. According to the contemporary theories, metaphor is a matter of people's thought and reason. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) As it is an important cognitive tool, it reveals how people perceive unfamiliar, abstract concepts via familiar, concrete ones on the basis of bodily experience. (Wu Shixiong George, 2007). The purpose of this paper is to study how “joy” and “anger”, two basic and extreme emotional concepts are metaphorized in English and Chinese from a cognitive perspective. Furthermore, it looks in depth at the similarities and differences between English and Chinese metaphors about “joy” and “anger”.

Keywords: Metaphor, Joy and anger, Cognition, Culture, Bodily experience

The contemporary metaphor theory in cognitive linguistics regards metaphors as playing an important role in the conceptualizing process of emotions (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 15-21); and metaphors of emotions in the language are most typical examples to show how abstract concepts are structured by more concrete concepts metaphorically, for emotions are highly unstructured concepts. “Happiness” and “Anger” in English and Chinese are good examples to prove they have the same metaphorical concepts of emotions in both languages, and on the other hand, metaphors are greatly nation-specific and culture-loaded (Peilei Chen, 2010).

This paper will reveal the differences between English and Chinese in emotional conceptual metaphor systems. Furthermore, the paper will also make a thorough analysis of the phenomena for the similarities and differences.

1. Comparison of Joy/喜悦 in Chinese and English

Joy/喜悦 is one of human beings most basic emotions. General psychology holds that joy/happiness is the psychological pleasure and comfort an individual has after obtaining the expected objective. The intensity of happiness has a bearing on the degree of easiness and the probability of obtaining the objective. When the desires are satisfied on unexpected moment and occasion, people will enjoy greater happiness. (Yiqian Ye, 1997: 348)

1.1 Differences in Bodily Change

In expressing the emotions of happiness in terms of the facial features, English highlights the eyes as in the sentences below:

- (1) Amusement gleamed in his eyes.
- (2) Her eyes were sparkling like diamonds.
- (3) His eyes glinted when he saw the money.
- (4) Her eyes twinkled with merriment.
- (5) 我正在街上漫步逍遥，忽然有只小手拉住我的衣角，眉开眼笑地仰着小脸蛋。(杨朔，《孤儿行》)

I was strolling on the streets; suddenly a little hand pulled my clothes, looking cheerful with her lovely face. (Shuo

Yang, *Orphan*)

(6) 大孙儿翔翔今年大学毕业，分配得很理想，小孙儿圆圆又接到了大学的录取通知书，喜事接踵而来，张师母不由得喜上眉梢，甜渗心头。(陈慧贤，《人生七十古来稀》)

Her older grandson Xiangxiang graduated from college this year, and already found a good job, her younger grandson Yuanyuan also received the university admission notice, wedding coming up, Master Zhang's wife could not help but happy appears on her face, her heart felt sweetness. (Huixian Chen, *People rarely live over seventy*)

(7) 周大勇站在窗门口，双手撑住门框，喜眉笑眼地说：“同志们，想打仗？要得。马上就有大仗打！”(杜鹏程，《保卫延安》)

Dayong Zhou is standing at the door, hands braced frames, beaming with joy and said: “Comrades, want to fight? That's great! We will have a big fight very soon.” (Pengcheng Du, *Defend Yan'an*)

Compared with English, Chinese uses both eyes and brows to express the emotion of happiness. Brows are regarded as one of the most obvious indicators of internal feelings. (Zoltán Kövecses, 2010) Another difference seems to be apparent with regard to the focus of the emphasis. English focuses on the increase of brightness of eyes, while Chinese emphasizes the change in the physical shape of eyes, we have the expressions, 眉头紧锁 (frowning), 愁眉苦脸 (grimacing), 眉来眼去 (flirting), 眉目传情 (ogling), concerned with eyebrows. Another distinction lies in eye expressions. English emphasizes the increase of the brightness in eyes, while Chinese focuses more on the change in the shape of eyes.

1.2 Differences in Color

It is said that the color stand for joy/happiness in the Western countries is “WHITE”. In western countries the bride wears a white veil (穿白纱的婚礼). White Christmas symbolizes “joy and happiness”. “White days” means “lucky and auspicious”; “white moment of life”, means (the most proud time in one's life); “days marked with a white stone” is the “joyful day”. (Jiaxu Chen, 2004).

And from an anthropological point of view, most Europeans are white; they think white can bring the natural beauty. Western Europe's geography is more related to white—“snow”. It strengthens their awareness of the positive white color. (Jiaxu Chen, 2004).

In China, the color red symbolizes “joy”, “pleasure”, “happiness” and “good luck”(Hong Zhou, 2001). The traditional Chinese wedding loves to use things with red color, for example: “red candles”, “red scarf”, “the bride's big red coat”, not only to bring festive wedding atmosphere, but also add more reminisce of the days. People may think their marriage life will become better and better. In the old saying “red” can also ward off evil and avoid disaster. So red in the Chinese language has a metaphorical meaning of “happy, lucky, and warm”. The Chinese people have the expression double happiness (红双喜) written in red, which is a traditional symbol for an event of “special joy” and 开门红 (a good start), which means to begin well and to make a good start (Yanchang Deng&Runqing Liu 1989, 57-58). The Chinese culture since ancient times advocated a “red” psychology from the worship of the ancient Sun God. The sun rises in the east, its red color and hot temperature give people the feeling of mystery. Court officials are living in “vermillion gates”, “the red walls and green tiles” and “red gates of the rich” which is a symbol of “a rich family”.

1.3 Differences in the Use of Container

Although both English and Chinese use the CONTAINER metaphor in expressing the emotion of happiness. The containers in the HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER metaphor between the two languages are not exactly the same. In English, the container is largely the body whereas in Chinese it is mainly the heart inside the body. Indeed, the heart can also act as the container of happiness in English, like “My heart is full of joy”, but such a case is really infrequent. In Chinese, other body parts like bosom and chest are also used as containers of happiness, such as 他心中满怀喜悦 (His heart filled with joy). Although the difference seems to be one of degree; it does contribute to the more general difference between the two languages.

In conclusion, the feeling of “joy” in English and Chinese has some similarities. But each language user belongs to a particular speech community; each speech community has its established history, culture, customs, and standard values. Therefore, the emotional metaphor of “joy” has different value systems in English and Chinese.

2. Contrastive Analysis of Anger/愤怒 in Chinese and English

Anger is also one of human being's most basic emotions. According to general psychology, anger is the experience of cumulative tension resulted from one's action towards his desire being obstructed. The obstruction of desire is

suffering frustration. When the individual realizes the causes of frustration, he often has angry reaction to the person or object causing such frustration (Yiqian Ye, etc. 1997: 348). Although English and Chinese share some similarities in describing the emotion of anger, they are different from each other in the following aspects.

2.1 Differences in Substances

Although both English and Chinese use container to describe anger, yet they use different substances in the container. Look at the examples of anger:

(11) You make my blood boil. (Kovecses, 1990a:53)

(12) His anger welled up inside him. (ibid)

(13) He was bursting with anger. (ibid)

(14) He just exploded. (ibid)

(15) 老爷子脾气很大。(应用汉语词典, 2008: 958)

The old man is hot tempered. (Applied Chinese Dictionary, 2008: 958)

(16) 我可受不了这份窝囊气。(应用汉语词典, 2008: 1322)

I cannot stand this petty annoyance. (Applied Chinese Dictionary, 2008: 1322)

(17) 老板肺都气炸了, 恶狠狠地说: “再出岔子, 小心我炒了你!” (袁红梅, 杨春红, 2008)

My boss is pissed off with loud voice and said: “if you made a mistake again, you will be fired.” (Hongmei Yuan, Chunhong Yang, 2008)

(18) 宋江见打了两个, 怒气填胸…… (《水浒传》)

Song Jiang saw two of his men been hit, filled with rage... (“The Water Margin: Outlaws of the Marsh”)

Kovecses (1988, 1990a) and Lakoff (1987:377) provide a five-stage procedure, including the cause, the essentials of anger, control, loss of control and the consequences. The above anger metaphors reflect the development of stage 2-4 of the scheme: anger heats up the fluid in the container (1), the fluid rises (2), intense anger produces steam in (3), intense anger produces pressure on the container in (4), when anger becomes too intense, the person explodes (5), when a person explodes, parts of him go up in the air (6). When a person explodes, what is inside him comes out (7). Therefore, the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS THE HEAT OF A FLUID IN A CONTAINER in English has its grounding deeply rooted in the human experience of the hot fluid in a container. The words “boil”, “welled”, “bursting”, “steamed up”, “blow up” are all the examples to express “anger” from the perspective of the “hot fluid”.

The metaphorical expressions of the conceptual metaphor “Anger is hot gas in container” in Chinese are actually based on our commonsense knowledge of the physical world and can be proved by Kovecses’ emotion scenario: When gas closed up in a container is heated, it will expand and cause increasing internal pressure to the container, with an ultimate consequence of explosion if there is no exit for it. Compared with English, the above Chinese examples demonstrate that Chinese uses more body-part nouns than English in its conceptualization of anger in terms of gas (气)?

2.2 Differences in the Use of Body Organs

Although both English and Chinese conceptualize anger as fire, Chinese tends to employ more body-part words in its conventional expressions of anger. The internal organs, including liver, belly, thoracic cavity and heart are specified as places where fire burns when one gets angry. Besides, the seven apertures in the head are also conceptualized as the outlets of anger in Chinese. Instead, English is inclined to use fewer body organs in expressing the emotion of anger, for in English some body parts have certain implied meanings, which may sometimes be associated with sex and excretion.

2.3 Differences in Other Aspects

Although GAS belongs to quite a distinct domain from FLUID, the correspondences between GAS and ANGER and those between FLUID and ANGER share some common features, such as HEAT, INTERNAL PRESSURE, and EXPLOSION, which accounts for the fact that both FLUID and GAS can be the source domain in terms of which anger is understood. In English, Lakoff and Kovecses (1987) have also detected some other principal metaphors in conceptualization of anger, which can't find suitable equivalents in Chinese. The metaphors and their respective linguistic realizations are showed below:

1) ANGER IS INSANITY

- (19) You're driving me nuts.
 (20) The woman went into an insane rage.
 (21) If we have to wait another hour, I'll get hysterical.

The above expressions are formed on the basis of the fact that agitation is an important effect of anger and it is also an important part of our folk model of insanity.

2) ANGER IS AN OPPONENT (IN A STRUGGLE)

- (22) You need to subdue your anger.
 (23) He tried to fight back his anger.
 (24) The man lost control over his anger at last.

Since anger may do harm and cause danger to both the angry person himself and others with his abnormal behaviors, the angry person recognizes this danger and regards the danger as an opponent.

3) ANGER IS A DANGEROUS ANIMAL

- (25) His anger is insatiable.
 (26) It's dangerous to arouse his anger.
 (27) He unleashed his anger.

In fact, the ANGER IS A DANGEROUS ANIMAL is tied to another widespread metaphor in the west, i.e. PASSIONS ARE BEASTS INSIDE A PERSON. In the case of anger, the beast presents a danger to other people, thus it is a dangerous animal.

4) ANGER IS BURDEN

- (28) Unburdening herself of her anger gave her a sense of relief.
 (29) The manager carries his anger around with him.
 (30) After I lost my temper, I felt lighter.

When a person gets angry, he may feel stuffed up in his chest because of increased internal pressure; therefore, anger is regarded as a burden, which gives the angry person lots of stress.

In summary, both English and Chinese use the central conceptual metaphor ANGER IS HEAT. But at a more specific level, English applies FIRE and FLUID metaphors while it is FIRE and GAS metaphors in Chinese. The two languages follow the same metonymic principle, describing the emotion of anger by referring to its related physiological effects. Allan (1995) thinks the physical senses of the people are just the beginning for us to experience the world, in the end, the understanding and awareness of I the world become differences in the cultures. The human experience is the foundation which makes the potential metaphorical mapping possible, but each experience occurs in a particular cultural background and cultural patterns. Therefore, the metaphor contains a wealth of cultural identities; the different conceptual metaphors are not the same in English and Chinese which lead by the cultural relativism. Because of some complex factors such as cultural customs, geographical environment, cognitive highlights and the cognitive subjects, we have different cognitive experience of "anger" in English and Chinese.

3. Conclusion

The main objective of this study is to reveal the cognitive characteristics of the emotional metaphorical system in English and Chinese, by conducting a contrastive study of conceptualization and expressions of emotional metaphors in both languages.

Cognitive linguistics holds that our ordinary conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 4). Metaphor is a fundamental cognitive way for humans to conceptualize the world and it can also provide a new perspective for people to identify the world. Conceptual metaphor illustrates a relatively abstract conceptual domain by mapping a more concrete one. That is to say, the conceptual metaphor tends to have relatively concrete concepts as source domains and relatively abstract concepts as target domains.

Emotions influence the fundamental processes of perception and affect human conception and interpretation of the world around them. Most of human emotions are abstract and vague and they can't be fully comprehended on their own. They are always conceptualized and expressed in metaphorical terms and expressions.

This article combines with the corpus of daily life and literary works from a cognitive perspective, carries out a systematic study on emotional metaphors. After researching the theoretical basis of this study, the thesis discusses the nature, characteristics, classification and the emotional metaphor mechanism.

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