

Contrastive Analysis on the Conceptual Metaphor of the Temperature Term “Cool” in English and Chinese

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Abstract: Temperature is a physical quantity in nature that represents the degree of heat and cold of an object. It is a basic and important human experience of the external environment, and plays a key role in our construction of cognitive schemas. Chinese temperature words are divided into “re”, “wen”, “liang” and “han”, and it is believed that these four basic temperature words can reflect people’s basic understanding of temperature category. The same division of temperature exists in English: “hot, warm, cool, cold”. From the perspective of conceptual metaphor theory, this paper systematically analyzes the metaphorical meaning of the temperature term “cool/liang” in English and Chinese languages. Through research, it was found that the concepts of “cool/liang” are based on the physical experience and extend more abstract concepts both in English and Chinese. The metaphorical meanings of “cool/liang” are affected by factors such as regional and cultural background and presents different characteristics. Through the English-Chinese comparison of “cool/liang”, it is found that Westerners will pay more attention to rationality, while Chinese will pay more attention to sensibility as well as people’s emotional significance.

Keywords: Cool, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, English-Chinese Comparative Analysis.

1. Introduction

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson published the book *Metaphors We Live By*, which marked the beginning of metaphor research on cognitive view [5]. Human beings form an interactive cognitive relationship with the outside world through metaphor. Human’s perception, thinking and behavior are dominated by metaphor to a great extent. In addition to relying on vision, human beings perceive and understand the world through the image schema based on the body feeling and life experience from infancy. Human’s experience constructs the basic schema of conceptual system. As an important basic schema, temperature also plays an important role in the formation of conceptual system.[1-2]

Temperature is a common phenomenon in nature and one of the most basic senses of human beings. Studying the language expressions of the temperature concept from the perspective of cognitive linguistics can explore the development rule of human ability, and it also help us further understand the mechanism of semantic development [9]. Chinese temperature words are divided into “re”, “wen”, “liang” and “han”, and it is believed that these four basic temperature words can reflect people’s basic understanding of temperature category. The same division of temperature exists in English: “hot, warm, cool, cold”. At present, scholars at home and abroad mainly focus on the four aspects of the study of temperature words, including the comparative study between English and Chinese, the comparative study between Chinese and Korean, the comparative study between Chinese and Albanian, and the comparative study between Russian and Chinese. Among them, “re/hot” has been studied the most, followed by “leng /cold”. Most researchers study metaphorical mapping of the temperature domain as a whole. However, few scholars have studied the conceptual metaphor of “liang/cool” [9]. Therefore, from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, this paper attempts to carry out an in-depth comparative analysis of the metaphorical system of “liang/cool” through rich corpus, in order to enrich the research results of the temperature word “cool/liang”. [3-4]

The thesis consists of introduction, text and conclusion. The text is divided into three parts. The first part introduces the related theory of conceptual metaphor of Lakoff and Johnson. The second part is analysis of the metaphorical meaning of “liang” in Chinese and “cool” in English by quoting relevant corpus. The third part is comprehensive analysis, pointing out the similarities and differences of the metaphorical meanings of liang/cool in Chinese and English, and then exploring the differences of cultural backgrounds and emotions between China and the West reflected by the temperature word.[6]

2. Organization of the Text

2.1. Analysis of Metaphors of “Liang/Cool”

2.1.1. Analysis of Metaphors of “Liang” in Chinese

This part will focus on the analysis of the metaphors of temperature term “liang” and showed the metaphorical expressions of it in the following detailed analysis. The data was obtained from a representative corpus of Corpus Center of Beijing Language and Culture University.

1) “Liang” refers to a small number

People are disappointed and frustrated with few product and happy with abundant food. Based on the perception and physical experience of temperature, people prefer to use the temperature term “liang” to describe few products. When “liang” is used to indicate quantity, it means a poor crop or few products.[7]

2) “Liang” refers to catching a cold

When a person stays in a cold environment for a long time, his body will unconsciously tremble. Usually, people are prone to catch colds on cool nights, and at this time their body temperature rises and they tremble. Therefore, when “liang” is used to mean being sick, it means you have caught a cold and need to take care of yourself.[8]

3) “Liang” refers to a refreshing smell

Appropriate temperature and humidity will make the body comfortable, and then keep people in a good mood. Fresh smell can also stimulate a happy mood. Human’s five senses

are interconnected, one sensory stimulation will bring another similar sensory experience. When the tactile experience of “liang” is mapped to the sense of smell, it means people smell a refreshing and pleasant smell, which makes people relax and happy..

4) “Liang” refers to gloomy, ghastly

Cool or cold places will make people feel uncomfortable, and staying in gloomy places can also make people feel scared and uncomfortable. Based on this similarity, when “cool” is mapped to the environmental domain, it refers to gloomy.

5) “Liang” refers to cruelty and ruthlessness

Ruthless and cruel people can easily make people feel bitterly disappointed, and cold weather can make people’s hands and feet cold. Based on similar physical and psychological feelings, “liang” refers to cruelty and ruthlessness when mapped to the personality domain.

2.1.2. Analysis of Metaphors of “Cool” in English

This part will focus on the analysis of the metaphors of temperature term “cool” and showed the metaphorical expressions of it in the following detailed analysis. The data was obtained from a representative corpus of the American Contemporary English Corpus, the British National Corpus.

1) “Cool” refers to a refreshing smell

The five senses of human beings are interconnected, and the stimulation of one sense can give a similar feeling to another sense. When “cool” is mapped from the tactile domain to the olfactory domain, it means a refreshing scent. This scent can make people relax. Based on this similarity, “cool is smell” can be obtained.[10]

2) “Cool” refers to harsh words

Cool or cold places can trigger people’s uncomfortable feelings. People also feel uncomfortable when others demean them with harsh or obscene language, insults, or sarcasm. Based on this similarity, “cool” is mapped to the auditory domain, extending the meaning of “cool” from “cool” to “harsh words”.

3) “Cool” refers to a cool style

At the end of the 20th century, the temperature term “cool” was considered an anti-mainstream word. Since then, people changed the perceptions of it. The usage of the word has increased, and it has evolved into something people admire. So, when “cool” is mapped to the style domain means that the way people behave, dress, think, is cool.

4) “Cool” refers to a recession

In winter, everything goes into a dormant state. People’s bodies become clumsy, and the economy will decline. If the economy is sluggish, many problems will increase and it will be difficult to recover. Therefore, when “cold” is used in economic field, it means economic downturn and recession.

5) “Cool” means satisfaction or approval

At the end of the 20th century, the temperature term “cool” was considered an anti-mainstream word. Since then, people changed the perceptions of it. The usage of the word has increased, and it has evolved into something people appreciate. So, when “cool” is mapped to the evaluation domain, it means an endorsement of a rich experience and a way of doing things.

2.2. Comparative Analysis of Metaphors of “Cool” in English

From the above part, it can be found that there are similarities and differences between the metaphors of the basic temperature terms “liang/cool” in English and Chinese. Conceptual Metaphor Theory provides a significant

theoretical basis for exploring the temperature term metaphors. This part focuses on the comparative analysis between English and Chinese temperature term metaphors.

Comparison between Metaphors of “Liang/Cool” in English and Chinese.

Culture has a profound impact on language. The use of metaphor is carried out in the national cultural environment and historical and cultural background. Therefore, language materials are bound to be affected by the pragmatic environment. They have the meaning of national culture and are a mirror of national history and culture. As two different cognitive subjects, English and Chinese nations have many differences in cognitive angles and directions due to the differences in national culture, living environment, living habits and values, which are inevitably reflected in language expression. Therefore, there are some differences in temperature metaphor between English and Chinese.

From this study, we can see the relationship between the similar physical experience and word structure of English and Chinese ethnic groups, and also see the differences in expression due to various factors such as cultural background.

With reference to the corpus, “liang” is a metaphor for small number, catching a cold, refreshing smell, gloomy, cruelty and ruthlessness, not being enthusiastic, failure, disappointment, indifference, sparsely populated places, and sadness. “Cool” is a metaphor for refreshing smell, harsh words, cool style, recession, satisfaction, indifference, quiet, calm, cool colors. Through comparative analysis, it is found that there are 21 metaphorical mapping types of “liang / cool” in English and Chinese, including 2 common metaphorical mapping types in English and Chinese, 10 metaphorical projections unique to “liang” in Chinese and 7 metaphorical projections unique to “cool” in English. This shows that there are many similar types of metaphors in English and Chinese, and English and Chinese native speakers have many similar physical experiences and psychological feelings, and also have their own unique physical and psychological feelings.

In addition, “liang / cool” in English and Chinese mainly projects to 10 target domains. Of the 10 target domains, 4 are projected to people’s emotional attitude domain; 4 are projected to people’s personality domain; 3 are projected to the state domain; in addition, environmental domain, evaluation domain, olfactory domain, auditory domain, style domain, visual domain, and property domain. Thus, it can be seen that the mapping to the emotional domain and to the attitude domain are the most basic metaphorical mapping of “cool/liang”. Through the comparison of emotional attitude domains between English and Chinese, it is found that the metaphorical projection of “cool/liang” reflects that westerners pay more attention to rationality and objective way of thinking, while Chinese pay more attention to sensibility and emotional expression. Through the analysis of metaphor projections, it is found that the word “liang” is mostly derogatory, and is mostly used to describe a bad character, psychology or state of things. This phenomenon can be explained from people’s physical experience: cold weather makes people unhappy, and then affects people’s psychological feelings, so “liang” gradually tends to express negative meanings. On the contrary, the word “cool” in English is mostly neutral or positive, and is mostly used to describe a good character, mood and style. This phenomenon can also be explained from people’s physical experience: cool temperature will make people relax and make people feel happy, so “cool” can be used to express neutral or positive

meaning. This is an indication from this study, and it also lays a foundation for future research work.

3. Summary

If you follow the “checklist” your paper will conform to the requirements of the publisher and facilitate a problem-free publication process. English and Chinese native speakers have the same body structure, temperature experience, and cognitive mode, and will inevitably produce similar metaphorical expressions. However, they have their own unique cognitive feelings and psychological experience due to the influence of region, cultural background, and human cognitive subjectivity. Therefore, “liang/cool” in English and Chinese extends many similar metaphorical expressions, and also extends a large number of dissimilar metaphorical expressions. Through the comparative analysis of “liang/cool”, this study reveals the metaphor projection mechanism of “liang/cool” in different cultural backgrounds, which enriches the metaphorical projection research of temperature words.

Metaphor has now more affected our daily life. With the development of the ages, more and more new things have emerged. If we just blindly add new words, it will bring more and more inconvenience to our communication. At this time, we need to use some words in the original language to express them. At first, this borrowing may be metaphorical, and finally this metaphorical gradually disappears and becomes a fixed way of expression. The temperature domain image schema and the conceptual metaphor system based on it play two main functions in the process of human cognition. On the one hand, it can help people understand, apply and innovate the metaphorical concepts and metaphorical expressions in the temperature domain. For example, the combination of temperature words and other different words has formed many new expressions. On the other hand, the temperature domain image schema and the conceptual metaphor system based on it can also be used to infer some abstract concept domains and help people understand these abstract concept domains from a certain perspective.

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