

The Interaction of Metaphor and Metonymy in the Chinese Expressions of Body-part terms

Yan and Mu

L'INTERACTION ENTRE LA METAPHORE ET LA METONYMIE DANS LES EXPRESSIONS CHINOISES SUR LES PARTIES DU CORPS—YAN ET MU EN VERSION CHINOISE (OEIL)

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Abstract: This is a study of metaphoric and metonymic expressions containing body-part terms *yan* and *mu* in Chinese to investigate the interaction of the metaphor and metonymy. While recognizing their differences from cognitive perspective, with metaphor involving things from two different domains and metonymy involving things within the same domain, I suggest that they also have similarities in certain respects. Based on the analysis of the self-made and small-scale corpus of Chinese texts of the metaphor and metonymy related to *yan* and *mu*, the author finds that metaphor and metonymy do not occur in isolation in Chinese.

Key words: metaphor, metonymy, differences, similarities, interaction

Résumé: C'est une étude sur les expressions métaphoriques et métonymiques de la langue chinoise dans lesquelles les termes de *yan* et de *mu* sont utilisés en vue d'examiner l'interaction entre la métaphore et la métonymie. Bien que les différences entre ces deux figures de rhétorique soient reconnues sous l'angle cognitif, c'est-à-dire que la métaphore implique des choses de deux domaines différents, alors que la métonymie implique des choses du même domaine, il nous suggère qu'il existe aussi des similitudes entre ces deux figures. Basé sur l'analyse d'un corpus concernant l'emploi de ces deux figures, qui est originaire des documents chinois authentiques et est fait par l'auteur elle-même, l'auteur s'aperçoit qu'étant mises en utilisation, la métaphore et la métonymie ne sont pas sans rapport entre eux dans la langue chinoise.

Mots-Clés: métaphore, métonymie, différence, similitude, interaction

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the two important tropes in cognitive semantics: metaphor and metonymy, and dig out the interaction of the two in Chinese expressions containing *yan* and *mu*, the two body-part terms for eyes. Although in principle metaphor and metonymy are distinct cognitive processes, it appears to be the case that the two are not mutually exclusive. They often can be found in combination in actual natural language expressions. In this sense, Goossens (2002) coined a cover term 'metaphonymy' to increase people's awareness of the

fact that metaphor and metonymy can be intertwined. This paper aims to test this new theory of metaphor and metonymy from the Chinese perspective.

In the contemporary world of metaphor research in cognitive science, there are actually too many different theories of metaphor. For example, in the field of cognitive psychology alone, there are a number of contenders for the best metaphor-theory contest, among them being domains-interaction theory (Tourangeau & Sternberg, 1981, 1982); structure-mapping theory (Clements, 1988); and conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003; Gibbs, 1994), to name just a few. Outside of cognitive psychology, there are several other theories that are

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currently studied and debated, including speech act theory (Searle, 1979); semantic field theory (Kittay, 1987); similarity-creating theory (Indurkhaya, 1992); and relevance theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1985/86), etc. The voluminous literature on the topic of metaphor does not make people more clear but actually more perplexed. Then the question of how best to do metaphor research arises?

According to Gibbs (1999: 32) a set of six distinctions/guidelines that scholars should recognize as they undertake to research and apply metaphor, in which “distinguish metaphor from metonymy” is one of the important aspects. However, in their eagerness to see metaphor in many areas of language and thought, scholars sometimes fail to distinguish between the different tropes, such as metaphor and metonymy. So the aim of this paper is to clarify these two terms and investigate their differences and similarities and most importantly their interaction in the common expressions of our daily life.

This paper consists of four parts with their contents as follows. The area of research is introduced in the first place. Then the definitions of the key terms, such as metaphor, metonymy, are presented and previous researches on the relationship between them reviewed. By reviewing the literature, some problems are found and the research questions for the present study are proposed in the third methodology part. Thus, the data of the Chinese expressions of *yan* and *mu* containing metaphor and metonymy is collected. After that the findings are discussed and finally the conclusion is drawn in the last part.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Metaphor and metonymy are regarded as two important figures of speech in traditional rhetoric. While initiated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), numerous researches on metaphor in the contemporary world of cognitive science, find that they are also widely used in our daily communication and reflected in our thinking, namely they are conceptualized. That is the reason why they become “the metaphors we live by”. Before engaging in the research of metaphor and metonymy, let us see the definitions of them first.

2.1 Definitions of key terms

2.1.1 Definitions of metaphor and metonymy in traditional rhetoric

As a representative of the traditional approach to metaphor and metonymy, the definitions in Halliday (1985: 319-320) can be quoted.

Metaphor. “A word is used for something resembling that which usually refers to; for

example, *flood poured in*, in ‘A *flood of protesters poured in following the announcement* (a large quantity came in).”

Metonymy. “A word is used for some thing related to that which it usually refers to; for example *eye* in ‘*keep your eye on the ball*’ (gaze).”

From the definitions given by Halliday, we can see that metaphor emphasizes the resemblance between things, while metonymy emphasizes the relation. Both metonymy and metaphor have been identified as central to the development of new word senses, and hence to language change

2.1.2 Definitions of metaphor and metonymy in cognitive semantics

In cognitive semantics both metaphor and metonymy are viewed as conceptual processes in which the notion of domain plays a crucial role. Lakoff (1987: 288), for example, offers the following definitions:

“...metaphor mapping involves a source domain and a target domain... The mapping is typically partial. It maps the structure in the source domain onto a corresponding structure in the target domain.”

“... a metonymic mapping occurs within a single conceptual domain, which is structured by an ICM [=idealized cognitive model].”

And afterwards, Croft’s (1993) epoch-making paper provides us a sound theoretical foundation for the two-domain approach to metaphor and the one-domain basis of metonymy.

These definitions are seemingly clear, but they are not unproblematic. The mere use of the term ‘domain’ itself needs clarification.

2.2 Existing researches on relationship between metaphor and metonymy

In cognitive semantics, some scholars argue that metaphor and metonymy are quite different. While others suggest that there are some similarities between the two tropes, claiming that metaphor is a kind of metonymy, or metonymy is a kind of metaphor.

Among the first group, three differences between metonymy and metaphor are commonly mentioned. The three main differences commonly noted between metonymy and metaphor are in a) their function (understanding with metaphor and referential for metonymy), b) conceptual mapping processes (metaphor involved in two-domain/ intra-domain mapping and metonymy involved in one-domain/ inter-domain mapping), and c) the kind of relationship established (similarity in metaphor versus contiguity in metonymy).

The first difference, advanced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 36-37) for example, is that metaphor is “principally a way of conceiving of one thing in terms

of another, and its primary function is understanding”, whereas metonymy “has primarily a referential function, that is, it allows us to use one entity to stand for another”. However, “conceive one thing in terms of another” and “use one entity to stand for another” is not a so clear cut division to us if the researchers did not point out the function differences. Though the function is told, metonymy is not merely a referential device. It also serves the function of providing understanding. For example, in the case of the metonymy THE PART FOR WHOLE there are many parts that can stand for the whole. Which part we pick out determines which aspect of the whole we are focusing on in our understanding. When we say that we need some *good heads* on the project, we are using ‘good heads’ to refer to ‘intelligent people’. The point is not just to use a part (head) to stand for a whole (person), namely, intelligence, which is associated with the head. Thus metonymy serves some of the same purposes that metaphor does, and in somewhat the same way, but it allows us to focus more specifically on certain aspects of what is being referred to.

The second difference between metaphor and metonymy is the conceptual mapping processes. According to cognitive linguistics, metaphor and metonymy are cognitive mechanisms that give rise to conceptual projection. Metaphor involves conceptual mappings across different experiential domains; the target domain is understood in terms of the source domain. For metonymy, on the other hand, conceptual mappings take place across different sub-domains within the same common, or super-ordinate, experiential domain so that the source domain mentally activates the target domain (Barcelona, 2000). But this requires an independent, appropriate account of what domains are in general and what actual domains exist or how to determine what domains exist. It is observed that the boundary lines between domains are often fussy. First, domains can form a hierarchy, so any two things are within some common domain. Second, domain divisions are context-sensitive and arbitrary. Third, source domain and target domain can massively overlap, and in particular a mapping can lie within the overlap. As in the example “One part of me thinks I should go to the party, another part is determined that I should do my tax form.” the mind aspects and person overlap. Therefore, in actuality “the distinction between metaphor and metonymy is scalar, rather than discrete: they seem to be points on a continuum of mapping processes” (Barcelona, 2000: 16), and they are often mingled together in complicated interaction and combination. At the linguistic level, metaphor and metonymy are main motivating forces behind much of semantic evolution and extension.

The third difference is that metonymy is founded on contiguity whereas metaphor is based on similarity. Contiguity and similarity are two kinds of association. Contiguity refers to a state of being connected or touching whereas similarity refers to a state of being

alike in essentials or having characteristics in common. However, there is slipperiness of notions of similarity and continuity and they are not crisply distinguishable. Why doesn’t similarity count as contiguity, since similar things are connected?

Among the second group of scholars, one of the most representative figures is Louis Goossens (2002), who points out that the interpenetration of metaphor and metonymy, and proposes four types of interaction, namely, a) metaphor from metonymy, b) metonymy within metaphor, c) metaphor within metonymy, d) demetonymization in a metaphorical context. Another important scholar Barcelona (2000) concludes that there are metonymy-motivated metaphors and metaphor-motivated metonymies.

Based on the review of literature, the scalar distinction between metaphor and metonymy is exposed. No one to my knowledge has a working system that discriminates examples of metaphor and metonymy. The distinguishing notions are just rough ones, not corresponding to objectively existing, neat categories within linguistic communication. There are indeed some researches on the interaction between metaphor and metonymy, such as Barcelona (2000), and Goossens (2002). However, the existing researches are dominantly English and there are few researches on the interpenetration of metaphor and metonymy in Chinese. Therefore, this paper tries to fill this gap, by studying the expressions containing *yan* and *mu* to find out whether metaphors and metonymies work together in Chinese.

2.3 Significance of the study

This research is significant in that it is a Chinese corpus-based study to confirm some theories of metaphor and metonymy on the one hand, and to challenge some theories on the other. The author does not emphasize the distinction between metaphor and metonymy as commonly assumed, but supports the concept of “metaphonymy” to accommodate the examples.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research questions

As what has been mentioned in last section, this paper aims to test the interaction theory of metaphor and metonymy from the Chinese perspective. Two research questions are proposed as follows.

First, do metaphorical and metonymical expressions of *yan* and *mu* in Chinese interact with each other?

Second, if they interact with each other, to what degree and how do they interact with each other?

3.2 Data collection

Though the “intuition-based approach” has been the traditional and widely used methodology for data collection in cognitive linguistics for a long time (Lan, 2003: 70), its weakness is obvious, as human beings tend to pay more attention to unusual examples than commonly occurred ones, and thus conclusion based on intuition may not be reliable or convincing. Therefore, this paper employs the corpus-based approach, which has advantages in both scope and reliability of analysis.

The self-made corpus is based on the examples from Yu’s (2004) study and the examples from the data base of Guoxue Baodian in the Library of Beijing Foreign University, altogether 57 examples of phrases and sentences containing the character either *yan* or *mu* in Chinese (See appendix).

3.3 Data presentation

The examples will be listed in Chinese only in the appendix, however, when discussed in the paper they will be presented in Chinese characters, *pinyin*, word-for-word gloss, accompanied with idiomatic translation. If the examples are pure metaphors, they will be labeled with A in the appendix. If the examples are pure metonymies, they will be labeled with B and if they are mixed cases/ metaphonymy, labeled with AB. This labeling is to facilitate accounting the number of the different tropes.

The identification criteria of the metaphors and metonymies in the examples are in accordance with the principle stated in Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003). The identification of the interaction of them is based on the author’s intuition and competence training in recognition of them. All the examples of metaphors and metonymies interaction are reviewed by another rater to a second checking and confirmation.

4. DISCUSSION

In Chinese, the two basic body-part terms for eyes are *yan* and *mu*, the latter being a more formal counterpart of the former. The large number of compounds and idioms involving *yan* or *mu* reflect the importance of our eyes as organ of sight in particular, and of cognition in general. As the old Chinese sayings go: “百闻不如一见” (It is better to see once than to hear a hundred times.) and “眼见为实，耳闻为虚” (What one sees is real whereas what one hears may not.) Both of these sayings highlight the importance of our eyes as our organ of vision in getting to know the world in which we live.

Since conceptual metaphor and metonymy are grounded in our body experience with the outside world, they are easily found in the Chinese expressions

containing *yan* and *mu*, the important organ of vision of our body.

4.1 Quantitative analysis

Based on the self-made corpus, the distribution of the metaphorical and metonymical expressions of *yan* and *mu*, and the interaction of them are counted in the appendix and presented in the following table.

Table of Classification of Metaphorical and Metonymical Expressions Containing *Yan* and *Mu*

Items Classification	<i>Yan</i>	<i>Mu</i>	Total	Proportion
Pure metaphor	6	9	15	26.3%
Pure metonymy	2	1	3	5.3%
metaphonymy	24	15	39	68.4%
Total	32	25	57	100%

This table reflects the quantitative analysis of the distribution of the examples, from which it can be easily observed that the mixed patterns of metaphor and metonymy account for a large part of 68.4% of the examples in the corpus. Therefore, metaphor and metonymy do not occur in isolation in the Chinese expressions of *yan* and *mu*.

4.2 Qualitative analysis

Firstly, the examples in the corpus reveal that there is an interaction of conceptual metonymy PART STANDS FOR WHOLE, with metaphor. For example,

- ◇ 計畫有了眉目
- ◇ Jihua you le mei-mu
- ◇ plan have PRT brow-eye
- ◇ The plan is beginning to take shape.
- ◇ 他政治面目不清
- ◇ Ta zhengzhi mian-mu bu qing
- ◇ he political face-eye not clear
- ◇ He is of dubious political background.

Brows and eyes are such important features of the human face that they together stand for the whole face or looks. It is also mapped metaphorically onto an abstract domain to refer to the ‘face’ of abstract things, such as the shape taken by the plan and the political background of a person.

Secondly, it is found that conceptual metaphor SEEING IS TOUCHING/

THINKING/KNOWING, or UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING and the conceptual metonymy PERCEPTUAL ORGAN STANDS FOR PERCEPTION are interweaving in the same expression. In both of these cases, seeing is the target domain, with mappings from more concrete source domains (the eyes and touching). Look at the following example.

- ◇ 他的眼光銳利，什麼事情都瞞不過他。

- ◇ Ta-de yan-guang ruili, shenme shiqing dou man-bu-guo ta.
- ◇ Her eye-light sharp-pointed whatever things all unable-hide-from her
- ◇ You can hide nothing from her sharp eyes.

The 'eye light' is often modified or predicated by such adjectives as *ruili*, *xili*, and *fengrui*, which all primarily mean 'sharp-pointed' or 'sharp-edged' and are associated with weapons like swords. So, the use of these adjectives is metaphorical in that they cause the 'eye light' to acquire properties of metal weapons. The 'eye light' itself is also subject to a metaphoric interpretation in which the person actually gets to 'know', rather than sees with her own eyes, all the things happening around her. In fact, the PERCEPTUAL ORGAN STANDS FOR PERCEPTION metonymy is also at work in the instance.

For another example,

- ◇ 我們做事情要從大處著眼，小處著手
- ◇ Women zuo shiqing yao cong da-chu zhuo-yan, xiao-chu zhuo-shou.
- ◇ We do things from large-place put to-eye small-place put to-hand
- ◇ We should keep the general goal in sight (or bear larger interests in mind) while taking hold of the daily tasks.

Metonymically, we have, here, PERCEPTUAL ORGAN FOR PERCEPTION (or EYES FOR SEEING) and INSTRUMENTALITY FOR ACTIVITY (or HANDS FOR DOING). In reality, however, this saying may simply describe a situation in which people 'keep the general goal in mind while working on the daily tasks'. That is, they do not see their goal with their eyes at all, and they do not necessarily work with their hands. In that case, the use of words *yan* and *shou* is metaphorical in this example.

Thirdly, various metonymies, such as CAUSE FOR EFFECT (开眼), PRECONDITION FOR RESULT (闭目塞听), MANNER FOR ATTITUDE (瞪眼), are operating in these examples, but the conceptual

metaphor THINKING, KNOWING, or UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING or, more generally, MENTAL FUNCTION IS PERCEPTION is also working here.

In short, many examples the conceptual metaphor and the conceptual metonymy of *yan* and *mu* do not occur isolated in the expression.

5. CONCLUSION

First, the quantitative analysis of the data in the corpus shows that metaphorical and metonymical expressions of *yan* and *mu* in Chinese do interact with each other and they take a large proportion of 68.4%. So the first research question is confirmed.

Second, the conceptual metaphor SEEING IS TOUCHING/THINKING/KNOWING or UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING and the conceptual metonymy PERCEPTUAL ORGAN STANDS FOR PERCEPTION are most commonly observed in the corpus. This explanation of the interaction form of metaphorical and metonymical expressions provides an answer to the second research question.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that the metaphors and metonymies are not mutually exclusive. And they often can be found in combination in actual natural language expressions. So this study of Chinese data supports the interaction theory of metaphor and metonymy. However, it must be pointed out that this is only a small scale study on metaphorical and metonymical expressions of *yan* and *mu* in Chinese, and further efforts need to be made.

Notes:

PRT=particle

COM=complement marker

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Appendix

短語	分類	句子	分類
1. 目擊	A	1. 小姑娘眉眼長得很俊。	B
2. 過目	AB	2. 計畫有了眉目。	AB
3. 舉目	AB	3. 他政治面目不清。	AB
4. 極目	AB	4. 兩個人的目光碰到了一起。	A
5. 窮目	AB	5. 她的眼光銳利，什麼事都瞞不過她。	AB
6. 縱目	AB	6. 我們做事情要從大處著眼，小處著手。	AB
7. 騁目	AB	7. 他開始用新的眼光來觀察周圍的事物。	AB
8. 放眼	AB	8. 他目光遠大/短淺。	A
9. 著眼	AB	9. 他真是鼠目寸光。	A
10. 惹眼	AB	10. 他是明眼人，也很明白事理。	B
11. 招眼	AB	11. 這次比賽獎牌會花落誰家，我們拭目以待。	B
12. 觸眼	AB	12. 古人雲，“士別三日便當刮目相看。”	AB
13. 打眼	AB	13. 這個展覽會真叫人開眼。	AB
14. 扎眼/刺眼	AB	14. 他們兄弟倆因為財產問題鬧的反目成仇。	AB
15. 奪目	AB	15. 他這個人見錢眼開。	AB
16. 掠目	AB	16. 我睜眼做，合眼受。	A
17. 眼/目前	A	17. 他對這件事睜一隻眼，閉一隻眼。	AB
18. 轉眼/眨眼	AB	18. 眼不見，心不煩。	AB
19. 目光如炬	A	19. 我們敢於瞪起眼來抓管理。	AB
20. 目光如豆	A	20. 他盲目樂觀。	AB
21. 眼明心亮	A	21. 我真瞎了眼，把他當作好人了。	AB
22. 閉目塞聽	AB	22. 我真是有眼不識泰山。	A
23. 瞪眼	AB	23. 你如果目無法紀的話，終會得到懲罰的。	A
24. 障眼法	AB	24. 那件事我閉著眼都能做。	A
25. 目空一切	A	25. 小林這個人路見不平一定不會冷眼旁觀的。	AB
26. 獨具慧眼	AB	27. 他總是目中無人。	AB
27. 另眼相看	AB		
28. 冷眼相待	AB		
29. 眼高手傲	A		
30. 眼高手低	AB		

A=Pure metaphor; B=Pure metonymy; AB=Metaphonymy

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