

Conceptual Metaphor of LOVE in Chinese  
--Before and after the Reform and Opening-up

Key words: Conceptual metaphor of LOVE; Reform and opening-up; Changes

According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980), conceptual metaphor (CM) is based on embodied experiences. Emotion CM is no exception. However, variation does exist despite the commonality in emotion metaphors. (Kövecses 2005) Then how can this happen “if emotion concepts and metaphors are embodied in universal human experiences”? Kövecses analyzed three possible reasons for this, of which the third aspect is “variation as a result of differential focus through time” (Kövecses 2008) but only one example from corpus analysis (Gevaert 2001&2005) is given. Therefore, this paper attempts to make an empirical study of Kövecses’ theory through analyzing changes of LOVE CM in Chinese.

Since reform and opening-up great changes have taken place in China. As the society develops, the lifestyle and the way of thinking have also changed. (1) Under such circumstances, has the CM of LOVE also changed? (2) If the answer to (1) were positive, are Kövecses’ three possible reasons sufficient to explain it in this case? What kind of roles do other factors (such as custom, politics, media, etc.) play? If there were no changes, what are the reasons lying behind? (3) Among those elements in (2), which ones have a relatively instant effect on conceptual metaphors while the rest ones have a long cycle to function? This paper tries to answer these questions and focuses on the second one.

This paper employs questionnaire and interview to discover LOVE CM in minds. Subjects are 60 undergraduates (about 19-22 years old) from one university in Beijing (group 1) and 15 adults born between 1948 and 1958 (group 2). Stage 1: The questionnaire requires subjects in group 1 to freely list at most 20 linguistic metaphors of “love” in Chinese in 3 minutes. Stage 2: Based on data collected from the questionnaire, different CM with 2 typical example sentences will be summarized. Then a semi-structured interview will be organized by using the above example sentences, during which subjects in group 2 need to single out those items they are not so familiar with and give the reasons. The interview will be audio recorded. The in-depth analysis and the conclusion will be reported to the conference.

References:

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