

A Comparative Analysis of Chinese and English SADNESS:

A Conceptual Metaphor Based Approach

Key words: Sadness; Conceptual Metaphor; Cognition; Culture

This paper communicates some of the findings of the comparative study on Chinese and English SADNESS. Many a research has been conducted to buttress conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), including Kövecses (2008) adopting the perspective of emotion language. Meanwhile, Kövecses claims that cultural elements are of great significance in the course of conceptualization (2008). With respect to universal human experience and diverse cultural influence, there must be great value underlying a comparative study on Chinese and English conceptual metaphor of emotion. Sadness, as a frequently used abstract concept in spoken and written languages, is usually compared to something concrete in real life in order to express its relevant ideas. In particular, it finds its embodiment in some natural objects. However, researches pertinent to SADNESS conceptual metaphor have been scarce.

Through this study, the author tries to answer the following questions: (1) is the conceptual metaphor SADNESS IS NATURAL OBJECT shared by Chinese and English languages? (2) In view of similarities and distinctions between Chinese and English sadness metaphors, what universal cognitive features and culture-specific features can be illustrated? (3) As for sadness, what different understandings, attitudes and handling ways can be revealed on the basis of Chinese and western cultures?

The methodology consists of two sequential steps: The first step concerns with the attempt to seek out the most representative literary works embodying the emotion of sadness in each language in their native speakers' minds respectively. The data will be collected by means of questionnaire, which includes several systematic open questions. The study is quantitative and cross-sectional. Therefore, the subjects are necessarily from at least 5 cities across China and 3 English speaking countries. Variables such as age and gender will also be considered. The preliminary interview with a limited number of Chinese female graduates in Beihang University has indicated that *Poems of Song Dynasty*, especially those written by Li Qingzhao, can stand for their comprehension of sadness.

The second step of the methodology concerns with a detailed study of the result of the first part. Those selected literary works, as the corpus, will be explored and analyzed at length. By comparing and contrasting metaphorical expressions of sadness in the two languages, and further pinpointing cognitive and cultural perspectives, question (2) will hopefully be answered. The outcome will provide not only bilingual evidence to back up conceptual metaphor theory but also an exploratory angle to discuss cultural differences. In addition, the study of sadness, an intractable psychological phenomenon, will lay the foundation for more directed researches on psychological counseling.

References:

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