

Original Paper

The Comparative Study of Anger Metaphors between English and Chinese

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Abstract

Conceptual metaphor is an important theory of cognitive linguistics, and the essence of it is to construct one concept by another, and human cognition cannot be separated from metaphor. Using this theory, this paper studies the metaphorical thinking of anger expression in English and Chinese based on the analysis of anger metaphor by Lakoff and Johnson, sums up the similarities and differences of anger expression in English and Chinese, and analyzes the reasons for differences. The study found that in the metaphor of anger, both English and Chinese are represented by natural forces, animals, fire, substances in containers, etc. But the difference is that Chinese use viscera, animal names, gas and so on to conceptualize angry emotions. These similarities are derived from the same physiological basis and similar cognitive style, and the difference between the two languages in expressing anger is due to their different cultural backgrounds. This study contributes to language teaching, language research, and cross-cultural communication, and promotes language learners' learning of metaphor as well as language culture.

Keywords

anger, metaphor, culture, Chinese, English

1. Introduction

This paper uses conceptual metaphor theory for a comparative study of metaphorical expression of “anger” in Chinese and English. In this paper, many methods are adopted, such as case analysis, induction, corpus method, and comparative study. A comparative study of anger metaphor is made in Chinese and English, hoping to find the similarities and differences in both languages in cognitive style and their underlying reasons. This study is also valuable for the study of other emotional metaphors. Besides, the study on the metaphorical expression of anger in different cultural backgrounds can

provide useful guidance for cross-culture communication and language teaching. For Chinese and English translators, this study will help them find more appropriate expressions in translation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *The Study of Anger Metaphor Abroad and at Home*

2.1.1 The Study of Anger Metaphor Abroad

Lakoff is the first person who studied anger metaphor. In his book, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things*, he did a thorough study of conceptualizing anger using conceptual metaphor theory, and gave a clear picture about how anger is conceptualized in English. In emotional metaphor, both the source domain and target domain are directly perceived. The conception of source domain is sensory and perceptual, and target domain responses subjectively to sensory perception such as emotions. Anger metaphor is one of the focuses of emotional metaphor research. In the book *Metaphors of Anger, Pride and Love*, Zoltan Kövecses (1986) refined the concept of anger metaphors in the second chapter “anger” after a lot of English corpus analysis. Lakoff and Kövecses co-wrote the chapter “anger” according to *Roget’s University Thesaurus* and other English dictionary materials in which they made a detailed analysis and summarized the conceptual metaphor of anger, which is a pioneering significance. Kövecses (2000) initiated the question of “Is anger universal or culture specific?” in his paper “The Concept of Anger: Universal or Culture Specific?”, and thus proposed a neutral view of “body-based social constructivism”. The paper “Anger Metaphors in the English Language” written by Orazgozel Esenova (2009) shows a corpus-based approach to study a set of anger metaphors with animals, plants, containers, and children as source domain; under the guidance of Kövecses, Esenova (2009) used a cross-disciplinary approach to study the metaphors of anger, fear, and sadness from the user’s cognitive system, and probed various physical and cultural factors in the creation of these metaphors.

2.1.2 The Study of Anger Metaphor at Home

Domestic study of emotional anger metaphor mostly focuses on Chinese-English contrast. Lin Shuwu (1998) reviewed the process of proposing conceptual metaphors, their definitions, and general meanings, and pointed out that conceptual metaphors come from the induction of everyday expressions, rather than in poetic and innovative interpretations. Subsequently, he enumerated basic conceptual metaphors of anger expressions in English and compared them with equivalent translated Chinese phrases to draw the similarities and differences. This study expanded the research scope of anger metaphors from English to Chinese, which proved that Kövecses’ emotion descriptive principles on English “anger” are universal. Peng Yi and Bai Jiehong (2007) reviewed the typical Chinese-English cognitive model of anger in the paper “A Cognitive Contrastive Approach to ANGER Neologisms in Chinese and English”. The paper investigated the relevant context of the neologism of anger and divided these neologisms into explicit and implicit. It also revealed a new anger emotional cognitive model that has emerged with the development of society and cognition. Li Xiuzhi (2010) made a general and individual analysis of the cognition of anger metaphors in English and Chinese idioms. She

believes that commonality arises from the similarity of human body, physiological structure, and many activities and behaviors. Different metaphorical concepts reflect personality, and the reason for the difference lies in the nationality of the language. Bao Zhikun (2016) argued that although metaphor is a universal principle for the emotionalization of English and Chinese concepts, there are differences in specific use. He mentioned that the four-fluid theory in western is a source metaphor of anger in English, and the metaphorical use of anger is traceable in Chinese traditional philosophy and Chinese medicine theory. The theory of “qi” and “yin and yang” are used to explain anger metaphor in Chinese. His study provides a reasonable explanation for the similarities and differences in expressing the same emotional metaphor.

3. Theoretical Foundation

3.1 Cognitive Mechanism of Metaphor

Before Lakoff's theory of metaphor came into existence, there once had been three explanations for the working mechanism of metaphor: comparison theory, substitution theory, and interaction theory. Aristotle proposes comparison theory. He believes that metaphor is a process in which one word replaces another, and the relationship between two words is a comparison. He holds that modifying is a primary function of metaphor (Aristotle, 1954). Comparison theory is built on the similarities, but it cannot explain how the similarity between the two works, and which part belongs to metaphor is difficult to find. With continued research, in the first century, Quintilian developed a theory of substitution for the working mechanism of metaphor, which is a rhetoric phenomenon that uses one equivalent literal expression to substitute another one. For instance, “Jack is iron.” In view of substitution theory, this sentence also means “Jack is strong-minded.” Iron here is a substitution of strong will. When it is used in comparison theory, however, the sentence is interpreted as “Jack is like iron”. From this example, it can be seen that the substitution theory is a modification of the previous theory. However, no matter how they limit metaphor to the study of words, they all consider metaphor to be decorative that does not conform to the normal language rules. Richard's interpretation of metaphor breaks through the limitations of the previous studies on metaphor and puts forward the theory of interaction, which promotes the transition of study from rhetoric research to cognitive research. It is believed that in the process of using metaphor, people have two kinds of conceptual activities about different things in the use of a word or phrase. There are two concepts called tenor and vehicle, and the similar part between them is called medium and ground. Richard's interactionism sees the metaphors we use in our language as an outgrowth of thought, not just a decoration of style. It emphasizes how metaphor comes into being, explains the process, and considers using metaphor with context. Besides the above three theories, Lakoff's mapping theory more accurately reveals the process of metaphor generation. Metaphor is the process of understanding another domain with one reference domain mapping from a source domain to the target domain. Metaphor is to recognize new things and express abstract and unfamiliar concepts. Each mapping process of a metaphor has an internal structure,

the source domain, and the target domain. For example, “Life is a journey.” This means that the concept of life is just like a journey. It has a beginning and an end with the established route and the scenery along the way. This metaphorical approach allows us to create new concepts such as the road of life and the journey of people.

4. Anger Metaphor Expression in English and Chinese

4.1 Anger is Fire

Anger is a kind of easily perceived emotion, because when people are angry, there will be a series of physical performance, such as high body temperature, flush of face, shortness of breath. Fire would produce much heat, and its temperature is very high. When fire fails to be controlled, it will generate substantial destructive power, and fire’s characteristics are very similar to anger, anger will exert adverse effects on the surrounding people and things. Hotness is the essential feature of fire; people will feel the body heat when angry, for anger can lead to blood circulation accelerating. When rapidly accumulating body heat is produced, but the body is temporarily unable to release the excess heat, this extra heat can make a person feel his body temperature. Heat and anger in the language are often concomitant; in practice, it is hard to segment these two metaphors. Therefore, a special cognition mode of “anger as fire” has been formed, which has also become a frequent metaphorical basis of anger, Kövecses (1990) pointed out that when a person is angry, he is short of breath, which makes him feel a kind of air flow from the lungs. At the same time, he may have high blood pressure, which makes him feel a rise in body temperature. Metaphorically, there are plenty of daily expressions in English and Chinese:

- A. She gave her son a look of burning anger.
- B. He was blazing with indignation.
 - a. 他火冒三丈。
 - b. 她满腔怒火。
 - c. 我心头火起。

4.2 Anger is Hot Gas/Fluid in a Container

The basic metaphorical concept of anger in Chinese is that anger is hot gas. “Qi” is highly respected in traditional Chinese medicine and philosophy. Here, “qi” is a kind of mental state and emotion of people. “qi” has an important impact on people’s mental state. If people encounter some situation when something goes wrong, the change of the mood will disturb people’s breath, and then one can feel the flow of gas inside the body. The angry expressions involved in “gas” is angry container metaphor of “qi”, namely the anger is mounted on the body (parts/organs), so the “gas” here refers to angry and unpleasant emotions.

In English, the metaphor “anger is hot fluid in a container” is usually used to conceptualize anger. In the above English expressions, anger is described as a fluid in a container. The underlying meaning of the word “boiling water” is used to express anger, and the state of anger has something in common with

it. Whether it is the boiling of water (liquid) or the outburst of rage, both require a continuous process of heating up. Anger is a constant stimulus from the outside world that makes it hard to contain, and eventually breaks out of the throng of reasons and reaches the boiling point. At the same time, the liquid is contained in a container, and the anger is contained in the body. Because of these commonalities, we find a cognitive counterpart that maps from the source domain “hot fluid in the container” to the target domain “anger”. There are some metaphorical expressions:

- A. His blood is boiling.
- B. He reached the boiling point.
 - a. 他气得肚子鼓鼓的。
 - b. 他差点气炸了。

4.3 Anger is Natural Force

It is common to personify natural phenomena, such as wind, thunder, snow, and rain. Examples like “太阳露出了笑容”, “暴跳如雷”, “狂风怒吼, 大发雷霆”. Given our knowledge of the human body, we project difficult abstractions onto the capricious and unpredictable phenomena of nature, such as thunder, lightning, and storms, which are often frightening. Normally, thunderous weather can make someone scared and fearful, and the thunder is very similar to the explosive venting of anger. In ancient times, when people could not scientifically explain the thunder and lightning, they would think it was angry thunder from god. In Chinese, ancient emperors or power holders described anger as the salutation “the wrath of thunder”, indicating the long history of using natural phenomena as metaphors for anger. In English, when anger grows too intense to control, it will explode. Under such a situation, anger is assumed to be a natural force, such as “Peter blew his top. “ “Mary hit the roof.” Because of these commonalities, in the cognitive process, we associate anger with frightening natural phenomena, which is similar in terms of sound and destruction, thus forming a metaphorical mapping from the “natural forces” to the “anger”.

4.4 Anger is an Opponent

Throughout human history, humans are always struggling in the world in order to survive. The history of human development is a history of force competition between the strong and the weak, as well as the opposition and competition between different forces. Therefore, it is a natural, cultural phenomenon to use anger as a metaphor for opponents in battle. The prototype of anger is to inspire people to attack attackers with the greatest strength and courage, which is an explosive and strong negative emotion. Such passion will damage both physically and mentally, so controlling anger is significant. However, controlling emotions is difficult, which requires people to have strong control and fight against violence. When anger tries to control people, and he tries to get rid of it, there is a confrontation between the two. This relationship is like an enemy in battle.

Since ancient times, westerners have tended to divide the universe into two different worlds, and everything in the world is in opposition. Man and nature are divided and opposed, and man is in the position of dominating and transforming nature. Under the domination of this cosmology, westerners

always have a strong desire to conquer and obtain from nature. Therefore, in understanding the concept of “anger”, they regard anger as a rival and can overpower, master, and repress it. However, the expression of this metaphorical concept is not common in Chinese, and should be based on the two basic metaphors of “anger is gas” and “anger is fire”. Examples in English and Chinese:

A. He is struggling with his anger.

B. She yielded to her anger.

a. 这个年轻人努力压住自己的怒火，可他失控了。

4.5 Anger is a Dangerous Animal

In Chinese, we will link anger with ferocious animals together, because people tend to be irrational when they are angry, terrifying people around him like ferocious animals, causing threat and danger. So metaphorical mapping is produced from the original domain “dangerous animals” to the target domain “angry”.

The metaphor, which is popular in western culture, holds that passions are beasts inside a person. That is to say, inside every man’s body, there is always a beast in it. Generally speaking, a man tries hard to hide this side to bind the angry animal inside him. The loss of control over one’s emotions is equivalent to an animal breaking free and posing a threat to others. Therefore, an angry person bears a resemblance to a dangerous animal. Examples in Chinese and English include: “他像一个暴怒的狮子一样”; “The crowd went ape.”

4.6 Anger is Burden

When people are angry, they may feel that their chests are blocked, and the internal pressure rises, anger can be seen as a burden. In the source domain, the power body is a person, the force tends to bear the burden, the antibody is the burden, the force tends to apply the force to the human body, and the final state is the person who bears the burden and feels unwell. Mapping into the target domain, the force body is the self, the force tendency is to take the pressure of anger, the antagonistic force is anger, the force tendency is to exert influence on the human body, and the final state is self-bearing pressure of anger. For example: bear anger, quench anger, and aggravate anger. In English and Chinese, “anger” is a material with weight. When a person is in a state of anger, his heart and mouth will feel blocked, and he will have a strong sense of bearing. If once the “anger” is relieved and dissipated, there will be a total sense of relief. Chinese often say “息怒”, “他的恼怒消失了” and so on. In English, examples include: “After he lost his temper, he felt lighter.” “She carries her anger around with her.”

4.7 Anger is Physiological Abnormality

Lakoff’s case study of anger suggests that the concept of emotion has a physiological basis. The biological basis largely determines how emotions are conceptualized. Anger, for example, is often conceptualized in terms of a person’s body temperature, heat, and internal pressure. When people are angry, their body temperature increases, heart rate increases, internal pressure increases. These psychological changes form the basis of language conceptualization, and language expression creates a conceptual structure system to express such feelings through metaphor. In Chinese and English, red is

used to express anger, such as “scarlet with rage”, “get red with anger”, “面红耳赤”, “脸红脖子粗”, Anger also causes a range of behavioral changes, such as throw a fist, show his teeth, jump down my throat, gritted his teeth. Additionally, it will disturb people’s perception ability, or even incur the loss of accuracy of judgment. For instance: become mad, blind with rage, cannot see straight, “气得头昏脑胀, 两眼发黑” and so on.

5. Analyses of Characteristics of English and Chinese

5.1 Similarities in Anger Metaphor

Through the comparison of English and Chinese materials, it is found that the metaphors for expressing anger in English and Chinese mainly include “anger is fire”, “anger is a substance in the container”. In addition, it is a metaphorical phenomenon that physiological effects of emotion exist in languages. When people are expressing anger in English or Chinese, the physical impact of anger is represented. When a person is angry, the body first becomes hot, such as the face grows hot, and then the pressure inside the body increases, such as blood vessels swell, cerebral hemorrhage, etc. The redness of the face and neck then stimulates other reactions in the body. They both metaphorize anger as a natural force because anger has something in common with it. As people are crossed, they are prone to speak and express as loudly as possible, behaving illogically, which can cause damage, like a hurricane. In both languages, animals are metaphorized to express anger. When a person gets irritated, he may lose his mind and behave like dangerous animals that often make people scared and insecure.

5.2 Differences in Anger Metaphor

From the example above, differences also exist in the metaphorical expression of anger in Chinese and English. They all treat anger as the heat in their culture. But these examples tell us: in Chinese, it is inclined to use the specific word “fire” in a phrase or sentence. In English, a verb is usually used to describe heat to express this concept. Through analysis, although anger is the metaphor of “anger is the substance in the container” in English and Chinese, the emphasis is different. English focuses on “anger is the hot liquid in the container”, while Chinese focuses on “anger is the hot gas in the container”. Although “liquid” and “gas” are two different source domains, they have the same metaphor implies. These implied characteristics-heat, internal pressure, the possibility and danger of explosion, make it possible to map from different source domains (liquid and gas) to the same target domain (anger). Another difference is that Chinese prefers to use more body parts. From an intuitive or medical point of view, excessive anger can hurt a person’s body, especially some parts of the body, such as “他气得七窍生烟”, “他大动肝火”, “他气得脸上红一阵白一阵”. From the above examples, we can see that in Chinese, people often use human organs to describe “anger”, which is more often than English. At the same time, we can conclude that cultural patterns exist and influence the choice of language expression for external experiences. In a nutshell, body parts are employed by both languages to express anger. The difference is that in English, body parts are implicit, but Chinese is explicit. The unusual color of face and neck is utilized in Chinese to express anger; by contrast, only red is used in English. Chinese

uses more colors because it contains more words to express colors. In addition, anger provokes body responses that can be metaphorized but refer to different organs. When we liken anger to dangerous animals, English uses animal-related words and rarely uses names to express anger. But in Chinese metaphorical expressions, the names of hazardous animals often appear. This is due to our culture; certain dangerous animals have been labeled, such as the fierceness of the tiger and lion signs. We name them with their typical characteristics.

5.3 Reasons for Similarities

5.3.1 Similar Physical and Psychological Experience

According to Kövecses, metaphorical mapping is rooted physiologically, and the physical and life experiences contribute to mapping as well. When human beings get angry, they have similar physiological reactions and life experiences, which form the commonality of anger metaphors. Humans' physical and psychological factors are mostly the same. Physiologically, the body is composed of water and salt and has the same body structure, such as the heart, liver, spleen, lungs, etc. Psychologically, as one of basic emotions shared by human beings, the factors that cause "anger" are generally consistent. Therefore, most emotion metaphors are based on the physiological and psychological effects of emotion on the body. For example, the temperature metaphor comes from the rise and fall of body heat during people's emotional experience, the color metaphor comes from the change of skin color during emotional experience, and the direction metaphor comes from people's experience of basic space and emotion.

5.3.2 Similar Cognitive Style

In cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor is the way people perceive and think about the world. According to the *Philosophy in The Flesh*, human concepts, reasoning, and mind are all built on material experience, and its primary forms are gradually formed depending on the perception of body parts, spatial relationships, and force movements. In other words, regardless of the cultural environment, the way people understand the unknown is mostly the same. People tend to understand and express concepts that are more tangible, concrete, and simple. Therefore, the emotional concepts of both English and Chinese are conceptualized from abstraction to concrete metaphorization. The vague and abstract concept of anger needs to be understood through specific concepts such as the heat of body, the change of color, fire, and natural force. Moreover, it is based on the metaphor that the body is a container.

As we all know, the source of cognition can be the experience of humans in the physical world. We call it natural environment. Natural environment impacts the changing of cognition and language. Because cognitive style is influenced by natural environment, people living in a similar environment may share the same cognitive style. As a result, emotion metaphors may be based on the same cognitive source.

5.4 Reasons for Differences

5.4.1 The Influence of Different Philosophy

In Chinese philosophy, everything in the universe derives from "qi". The flow of qi has no permanent shape, and can only be grasped as a whole. Therefore, the traditional Chinese way of thinking is

opposed to individualism, but advocates collectivism. Methodologically, Chinese philosophy can be called a philosophy of perception. The expression of “anger” using the concept of “qi” seems to explain the characteristics of Chinese philosophy: when looking at things first, it is understood from “qi”. Because it is impossible to grasp what “qi” is in terms of “anger”, the Chinese resort to physical abnormality, fire, weather, animal to understand anger. However, western philosophy focuses on the external world, which is what they call being, and the commonly used terms are being, entity, object, reality, and existence. From the study of the metaphorical concept of “anger”, the Westerners’ understanding of anger is judged and described by the observation and knowledge of material things. Therefore, anger should first be fire, physical abnormality, heat of fluid in a container, etc. that can be seen and felt. So there are “steam up”, “boil”, “burn” and so on.

5.4.2 The Influence of Different Culture

Different cultures and experiences explain varieties of anger metaphors in English and Chinese. Language is a part of culture. The burgeoning culture leads to the changing of language. In addition, language and thoughts have a close relationship. Thinking affects language, and language influences thinking, that is why people who speak different languages think differently. Additionally, thinking can be metaphorical, and the concept of metaphor constitutes a way of thinking. Although emotional metaphors in English and Chinese are based on human body and life experience, they cannot be independent of culture. From the perspective of organs that produce anger, Chinese has deeply embodied the essence of traditional Chinese medicine theory. According to Chinese visceral theory, the human body is a tightly integrated organism, and “qi” runs through them. In this regard, the theory of Chinese medicine is deeply influenced by the Chinese theory of yin and yang. When “qi” does not work properly or is dysfunctional in the body, it excites emotions, and when it gradually subsides, the emotions calm down. “Yin-yang theory” believes that universe is interacted by yin and yang. “fire” and “qi” are yang, water and other liquids are yin and related to “cold”. The Chinese yin and yang philosophy here aims to explain why the Chinese prefer to treat anger as gas. According to this theory, “fire” and “qi” belong to yang, while water and liquid belong to yin. Obviously, yang is related to “hot”, and yin is concerned with “cold”. This shows that high body temperature is one of physical reactions of anger. Western ancient philosophers believe that water is the origin of the universe. As a result, liquid has become a metaphor for anger in English.

In the 5th century BC, a view is proposed by Empedocles, saying that the universe consists of four elements: fire, air, earth, and water. This view catalyzes the theory of Four Body Fluids. This theory was still popular in Europe until the Middle Ages, different combinations of these four fluids in different human bodies determine physical, mental characteristics and personality of the person. A perfect person has the ideal ratio of these four body fluids. The above doctrine of body fluids provides a powerful explanation for the concept of anger as liquid in a container. Therefore, in the process of metaphorizing the emotions of English-speaking people, it is logical to favor liquids rather than solids or gases.

6. Conclusion

Based on analyses of conceptual metaphor, this paper summarizes the collected English-Chinese corpora and compares the anger metaphors between the two languages. Humans have the same physiological structure as well as a similar environment, so there are similarities in people's perception of objective things. But at the same time, because of a specific environment and historical and cultural elements, emotional metaphors reflect the characteristics of different cultures. There are many similarities and significant differences in terms of anger metaphors between English and Chinese. Such variations appear not only because of different experiences, but more importantly, they are influenced by cultural patterns. The "qi" metaphor in Chinese can be explained from the "yin-yang theory" and ancient Chinese medicine theory. When studying anger emotional metaphors, we must understand people's way of thinking, customs, historical traditions, and living environment so as to better understand the metaphorical connotation of anger in languages.

The research has a great guiding effect on foreign language learners, especially English translators. At the same time, it is significant in the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language. Through the comparison of Chinese and English anger metaphor, cultural differences are discovered and summarized, which promotes cross-cultural communication ability for language learners. However, it is difficult to grasp the corpus of anger metaphors comprehensively; incorporating more corpus into this study is necessary for enriching and perfecting the comparative study of anger metaphors in Chinese and English. Besides, current research is not covered completely, especially the thinking of English language researchers on the problem of Chinese and English anger metaphors, which is a problem to be solved in the future.

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