

## *Original Paper*

# The Study of Animal Metaphors in English and Chinese Idioms from the Perspective of Conceptual Metaphor

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### ***Abstract***

*This paper conducted a study of animal metaphors in English and Chinese idioms from the perspective of conceptual metaphor for the following reasons. Firstly, it summarizes the primary metaphors and its classifications by collecting and sorting out a large number of English and Chinese animal idioms and interpreting the representative animal “dog”. Secondly, it summarizes the similarities and differences of conceptual metaphors in English and Chinese animal idioms, and discusses the causes of these similarities and differences, hoping to help readers understand the nature and characteristics of idioms from a new perspective. It is found that the common characteristics and the similar physiological and psychological basis between human and animal lead to the similarities, while geographical environment, religious belief, dietary habits, literary works and legend, historical background and social customs lead to the differences in conceptual metaphors in English and Chinese animal idioms.*

### ***Keywords***

*contrastive analysis, animal idioms, conceptual metaphors, animal metaphors*

## **1. Introduction**

Idioms is one of the most important parts in language and culture. Due to the intimate relationship between human beings and animals, there are a large number of idioms related to animals in humans' language. People often make use of animal idioms to express their different emotions and reflect certain social phenomena. Animals are widely used in idioms or phrases in both English and Chinese. Since there are similarities between English and Chinese culture, a large number of English animal idioms can find equivalent or corresponding expressions in Chinese. However, there are also differences between the two cultures. Therefore, we can also find plenty of inequivalent animal idioms expressions.

In modern times, metaphor is not only a rhetorical device that can add the readability of articles, but also a way of thought before a way of words. Metaphor can help people to know and understand the complex world. Sometimes, it is difficult for human beings to think about or describe some abstract concepts in a non-metaphorical way. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) first claims that metaphor is a kind of cognitive phenomenon, and points out that people often use physical experience to understand abstract things. As one of the most important metaphorical phenomena in human beings' life, animal metaphor has stirred the interest and been attached the attention by many scholars. There is no doubt that human beings and animals have a lot in common. Thus the conceptual metaphor "HUMAN BEINGS ARE ANIMALS" has been studied by many scholars recent years. It is found that humans and animals have similarities in external characteristics, behaviors, personality etc. Scholars have conducted their research from the perspective of cognition, culture and translation. In terms of the text selection, English and Chinese text contrast, literature and economic texts are all involved. But there are very few research on idioms related to animal metaphors and few scholars have done systematic analysis on those kinds of idioms. Therefore, this thesis will make use of conceptual metaphor theory to make a contrastive analysis of English and Chinese animal metaphors from the cognitive perspective and explore their similarities and differences.

The data of this thesis mainly comes from famous dictionaries, such as The New Oxford English-Chinese Dictionary, Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Webster's New World College Dictionary, A Dictionary of current English Idioms and many others corpus, such as COCA and CCL. Besides, there are various animal metaphorical idioms in English and Chinese. But this thesis only selects some of them to make a research and analysis. Overall, this thesis mainly answer the following questions:

- (1) What is primary metaphor in animal metaphors in English and Chinese animal idioms?
- (2) What are the different classifications of conceptual metaphors in English and Chinese animal idioms?
- (3) What are the similarities and differences of animal metaphorical idioms in English and Chinese from metaphorical perspective?
- (4) What factors may contribute to those similarities and differences mentioned in question (3)?

## **2. Literature Review**

In this chapter, relevant studies will be reviewed from the following dimensions: the study on animal metaphors both at home and abroad and the research of animal idioms both at home and abroad from the cognitive perspective.

### *2.1 Studies on Animal Metaphors*

With the growth of interest in researches related with metaphors, a large number of scholars has devoted themselves to studying cognitive metaphor. Among these researches, the study of animal

metaphor is a very important branch of cognitive metaphor.

### 2.1.1 Research on Animal Metaphors at Home

Research on animal metaphors at home mainly focus on the perspective of cultural comparison and translation study. In terms of cultural comparison, the research of Li Xue (2006) shows that although there are a large number of expressions that use animals to express thoughts which are related with human beings in English and Chinese. However, there are also differences in the metaphorical meanings in the two languages due to the cultural differences. Xiang Chengdong and Wang Mao (2009) conducted intercultural research to investigate the English and Chinese animal idioms. Their research shows that there are similarities between English and Chinese animal idioms to some degree. But many aspects of animal idioms are specific to the culture of each nation. As for the translation study, the research finds its focus on the translation of literature works. Li Qiaohui (2004), Wang Shuwen and Liu Hong (2014) analyzed Hardy's novel and Chinese classic work Hong Looming from the perspective of metaphor respectively. Liu Ting (2011) conducted a translation study on the animal metaphors in Shui Husham under the framework of conceptual metaphor.

### 2.1.2 Research on Animal Metaphors Abroad

Lakoff and Tunner (1989) put forward "The Great Chain of Being metaphor", which is of great explanatory power to animal metaphor. They summarize four features of animal metaphors: systematic in organization; based on our experience; grounded on the conceptual metaphor as GENERIC IS SPECIFIC as well as the vertical hierarchical organization of creatures. As for the last feature "the vertical hierarchical organization of creatures", the various concepts can be ordered from the higher level to the lower one: HUMAN>ANIMALS>PLANTS>COMPLEX OBJECTS>NATURAL PHYSICAL THINGS. The conceptualization can go from the higher concept to the lower one. Thus the behaviors of human beings can be metaphorically understood from the angle of animals or plants, producing the primary metaphor of this thesis "HUMAN BEINGS ARE ANIMALS". In terms of culture, Kovesces (2002) conducted a deep research into conceptual metaphor and summarized a highly generalized metaphor "HUMAN IS ANIMAL", including the following conceptual metaphor: OBJECTIONAL HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS ANIMAL BEHAVIOR, OBJECTIONABLE PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS AND DIFFICULT-TO-HANDLE THINS ARE DOGS. He further pointed out that metaphors associated with animals seem to correlate with human characteristics. Thus, we can tell a speaker's attitude towards the person he or she is referring to through animal metaphors.

To conclude, the studies on animal metaphors at home mainly focus on the perspective of cultural comparison and translation study. And the studies on animal metaphors abroad put their focus on the theoretical study and culture. They all pave the way to the study of animal idioms from metaphorical perspective to some degree.

## 2.2 Studies on Animal Idioms

Idioms can be defined as “a particular phrase that cannot be understood in terms of the meaning of a single word”. It has the following characteristics. On the one hand, idioms are metaphorical and create mappings by using figurative objects and its implications. On the other hand, idioms are stereotyped, fixed, and not easily changed. They can be classified into many types. Among those classifications, animal idioms are the most representative part. Because animal idioms contain a lot of cultural loaded information, they frequently appear in human communication and interaction, thus attracting the interest of many scholars. Scholars have conducted a lot of researches on animal idioms from different angles. Generally speaking, these researches can be divided into two categories: the traditional study of animal idioms and the cognitive study of animal idioms. Since this thesis focuses on the metaphorical analysis of animal idioms, the following discussion is mainly about the cognitive analysis and metaphorical research of animal idioms. This section will review the representative cognitive research on animal idioms at home and abroad.

### 2.2.1 Research on Animal Idioms at Home

In China, the cognitive study of animal idioms is mainly carried out under the conceptual metaphor theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Fan Hongtao (2011) studied the formation mechanism of conceptual metaphor in animal idioms and found that the types of animal metaphors are mainly structural metaphor and ontological metaphor. He Yuling (2011) made a comparative study of cultural metaphors in English and Chinese animal idioms. She found that there are metaphorical overlaps and differences in English and Chinese animal idioms due to the similarities and differences in geographical environment, physiological structure, lifestyle etc. She proposed some translation methods to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings in inter-cultural communication and to achieve better mutual understanding. From the perspective of teaching Chinese as a foreign language to foreigners, Gao Wenjia (2012) made use of the metaphorical association between “human beings” and “animals” to explain the mechanism of animal metaphors and its enlightenment to teach Chinese as a foreign language. Tao Zhidan (2016) attempted to use conceptual integration theory to elaborate on the online construction and meaning understanding process of English animal idioms, and proved that conceptual integration theory had a strong explanatory power to reveal the cognitive processes behind English animal idioms.

### 2.2.2 Research on Animal Idioms Abroad

Since the emergence of cognitive science, cognitive linguistics has been widely used in various research fields because of its high adaptability to language research. The study of animal idioms has also turned from ontological linguistics to cognitive linguistics. In the cognitive study of animal idioms, most researchers focus on the study of animal metaphor. Lakoff and Turner (1989) proposed the existence of the great chain metaphor and thought that it is a mechanism on which animal metaphors depend. The theory, which can be viewed as a cognitive or cultural model, is constructed from the

concept of hierarchy, which places the various forms of existence (human, animal, plant, and complex object, natural and physical things) in a hierarchical order. They also stated the relationship between humans and animals. Fontecha and catalalan (2003) made a comparative cognitive analysis of the metaphorical usage of the fox/vixen and bull/cow pairs. Their analysis showed that the words for these specific animals were indeed used to refer to people in both English and Spanish. Based on the research of Mandarin Chinese and German animal corpora, Hsieh (2006) compared animal metaphors in Chinese and German and found that animal expressions showed different mindsets, as well as Chinese speakers' group-centered thinking and German speakers' individualistic thinking. Ruth Benedict (2009) gives a detailed description of the cultural undertones of animal idioms in her book *Patterns of Culture*. She also proposed a three-tier structure: surface cultural level; middle cultural level as well as deep cultural level.

Based on the above discussions, we can see that a large number of researchers have conducted research on idioms from different perspectives. And in these studies, the metaphorical study of animal idioms occupies an important position. However, most of them are still related to theoretical studies, especially cultural contrastive studies and translation studies. There is still research gap for metaphorical studies of animal idioms which can be used in language teaching and language acquisition.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

The study of animal idioms can not be separated from the understanding of conceptual metaphor. This section will explain the definition and classification of conceptual metaphor separately.

#### 3.1 Definition of Conceptual Metaphor

Conceptual metaphor theory belongs to cognitive linguistics. Compared with the language phenomenon that we usually talk about, it is more likely to be a way and habit of thinking, thus influencing the behavior patterns of human beings. Metaphor is a cognitive process to understand the abstract things from the perspective of known and concrete things. It usually involves two categories. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) pointed out that there are source domain and target domain in conceptual metaphor. The two domains are related by mapping whose base and motivation are human beings' embodied experience. As a way of thinking, metaphor exists in language in the form of the ubiquitous metaphorical expressions. In English, there are numerous conceptual metaphor, such as "ARGUMENT IS WAR", "LOVE IS A JOURNEY", "THOUGHT IS FOOD" etc. Moreover, there are more than one element both in source domain and target domain. Take the conceptual metaphor "ARGUMENT IS WAR" as an example, there are debaters, arguments, judges etc. in source domain ARGUMENT. While in the target domain WAR, there are the two sides of the battle, what happened on the battlefield, weapons etc. Two most important elements in conceptual metaphor are source domain and target domain. They have different characteristics. That is, target domain is more abstract and doesn't have the concrete features, thus being difficult to be understood and needing being conceptualized. However,

source domain is more concrete and easier to describe, thus being easy to be understood and accepted. The source domain is used to explain things, such as “WAR”, “JOURNEY”, “FOOD”, while the target domain is used to be interpreted, such as “ARGUMENT”, “LOVE”, “THOUGHT”. In the animal idioms, source domain is animal image and the target domain is the special connotation expressed by the animal image. The basis of the mapping of animal idioms is various embodied experience of human beings.

There is an important principle in conceptual metaphor theory, namely the principle of metaphor prominence. That is to say, people only select the most prominent feature of the source domain for mapping. Therefore, only the most prominent features of animals are mapped from the source domain “ANIMALS” to the target domain “HUMAN BEINGS” in the metaphorical process of “HUMAN BEINGS ARE ANIMALS”. And this kind of mapping is not random. It is based on people’s experience. These specific experiences come from people’s close contact with animals since ancient times. On this basis, human beings have different emotional attitudes towards different animals, such as love, disgust, fear, awe and so on. Thus, a variety of vivid animal metaphors appears in our language. To illustrate how these animal-related words acquire metaphorical meaning, Kovecses (2002) explains that humans first assign human characteristics to animals and then reapply these characteristics to describe humans. That is to say, humans use these human-based animal characteristics to understand certain human behaviors, and a variety of animal metaphors is generated.

### *3.2 Classification of Conceptual Metaphor*

According to the theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), conceptual metaphor can be classified into three types: structural metaphor, ontological metaphor and orientational metaphor. These three types all show people’s cognitive ability and the association of language and people’s cognition. The following paragraphs will discuss these three types respectively.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) holds that structural metaphor is a kind of metaphor where one concept is metaphorically constructed in terms of another, such as the concept ARGUMENT and the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR. In structural metaphor, one concept is constructed by another concept, and the words used to describe one concept are used to describe another one. For example, the more abstract concept “TIME” is constructed by the more concrete concept “MONEY” in the conceptual metaphor “TIME IS MONEY”, showing that time is as precious as money.

The second type is ontological metaphors. Our experience with objects and entities provides the basis for understanding this metaphor. That is to say, people understand experiential entities and material metaphors from the perspective of objects and substances. That is, we can regard abstract and intangible concepts such as thoughts, emotions, and mental activities as concrete and tangible entities or substances. Just as what Lakoff and Johnson has said: “Once we can identify our experiences as entities or substances , we can refer to them, categorize them, group them, and quantify them, and by this means, reason them.” Ontological metaphors can be divided into two types: personification and

container metaphors. Personification metaphors are the most obvious ontological metaphors, because they allow us to understand a great deal of non-human experience in terms of human motives and characteristics. In this conceptual metaphor, abstract concepts such as thoughts, states, activities, events, and emotions are understood in terms of concrete or visualized entities and examples, especially our physical experiences.

The orientational metaphor is another type of conceptual metaphor in which one concept constructs another concept through a complete system. The study of Zhang Li (2016) shows that one prominent feature of this kind of metaphor is that most of them are related to spatial direction, such as up and down, front and back, etc. For example, the conceptual metaphors: “HAPP IS UP”, “SAD IS DOWN”. These two conceptual metaphors both have a basis: downward posture is associated with sadness, while upright posture is associated with positiveness. Added the conceptual metaphor “CONTROL IS ABOVE”, we have “under my control” in Chinese to express that everything is well arranged by someone.

#### **4. A Cognitive Analysis of Animal Metaphors in English and Chinese Animal Idioms**

##### *4.1 Conceptual Metaphors in English and Chinese Animal Idioms*

This section will abstract the conceptual metaphors in animal idioms to have a view of how human beings show their feelings and emotions in terms of animals.

##### *4.1.1 A Case Study of Animal Idioms Involving Dog*

According to the previous studies of Xiang Chengdong and Wang Mao (2009), there are 36 kinds of animal metaphors involving in the comparison between English and Chinese. But not all of them are worth further study because of their low significance. This paper narrows down the object of the study step by step.

Firstly, this thesis selects those animals whose frequency of occurrence is no less than four to make a research. There are 12 kinds of animals. Since the research of Liu Ningning (2022) shows that, there are no idioms that are related with duck containing the animal metaphor “HUMAN BEINGS ARE ANIMALS”. Thus, this thesis only conducts a research on 11 animals. They are 驴/Ass & Donkey, 狗/Dog, 鸽子/Dove, 龙/Dragon, 鹰/Eagle, 马/Horse, 狮子/Lion, 猴/Monkey, 鼠/Mouse, 猫头鹰/Owl, and 兔/Rabbit.

In addition, during the process of data collection, the animal word “dog” shows a clear advantage: there were 33 idioms related to the animal “dog” in English and 45 in Chinese. Therefore, this paper takes the animal word “dog” as a typical and representative one. This section will mainly discuss and explain the animal metaphor about “dog” in English and Chinese animal idioms.

Through the cognitive analysis of idioms that related with “dog”, many conceptual metaphors related with “dog” can be abstracted as “HUMAN BEING ARE DOGS”. And many English and Chinese animal idioms can be shown as follows:

**(1) FAITHFUL PEOPLE ARE DOGS.**

- i. Die dog for somebody : 为某人而死, 以表衷心。
- ii. Have a dog in the hunt/fight/race: 在比赛中支持某个特定的人。
- iii. 狗吠非主: 臣子各忠于自己的君主。
- iv. 狗不嫌家贫: 人们不会嫌弃贫穷的家。
- v. 犬马之劳: 像狗和马一样为君主尽忠, 比喻心甘情愿受君主驱使, 为君主做事。

**(2) STUBBORN PEOPLE ARE DOGS.**

- i. The scalded dog fears cold water : 一旦狗被热水伤害, 它甚至害怕冷水。
- ii. Dog returns to its vomit: 狗吃它的呕吐物, 比喻人重复恶心的、坏的行为。
- iii. 狗改不了吃屎: 重蹈覆辙。
- iv. 狗不咬人心不安: 狗总想咬人, 就像坏人总想害人。

**(3) MISERABLE PEOPLE ARE DOGS.**

- i. Treat somebody worse than a dog : 对人挑剔且残忍。
- ii. To lead a dog's life: 过狗一般的生活, 生活是困难且不幸的。
- iii. 蝇营狗苟: 比喻为了追逐名利, 不择手段, 像苍蝇一样飞来飞去, 像狗一样的不知羞耻。

**(4) DISABLE PEOPLE ARE DOGS.**

- i. Dead dog : 没用的东西, 废物。
- ii. 犬子: 谦称, 对人称自己的儿子。

**(5) English-specific conceptual metaphor:****1) HAPPY PEOPLE ARE DOGS.**

- i. Like a dog with two tails: 欣喜若狂。
- ii. One of the top dogs: 优胜者, 佼佼者或者权威。
- iii. A gay dog : 一条快乐的狗, 一个快乐的人。
- iv. A jolly dog : 风趣的人

**2) PRECIOUS PEOPLE ARE DOGS.**

- i. Lucky dog: 幸运儿。
- ii. Love me, love my dog: 爱屋及乌。
- iii. The head of a dog is better than the tail of a lion: 狗头比虎尾好, 喻指人在微小中寻找伟大。

**(6) Chinese-specific conceptual metaphor:****1) OBEDIENT PEOPLE ARE DOGS.**

- i. 兔死狗烹: 把抓住兔子的猎狗烹煮吃掉, 比喻成就事业后就把有功之臣杀了。
- ii. 跼犬吠尧: 桀的犬向尧狂吠, 比喻各为其主。

**2) MODEST PEOPLE ARE DOGS.**

- i. 犬子: 谦称自己的孩子。
- ii. 犬舍: 谦称自己的家。

**(7) SOCIAL NEGATIVE THINGS ARE DOGS**



- i. Dog eats dog: 竞争激烈的。
- ii. 狗皮膏药：贬义词，比喻骗人的货色。
- iii. 狗眼看人低：看不起别人。

Based on the above discussions, we can conclude the following points:

Firstly, conceptual metaphor in dog-related idioms take the same conceptual domain in both English and Chinese. That is, the animal “DOG” is the source domain and “HUMAN BEINGS” is the target domain. They all use the concept and knowledge of dog to understand the concept of human beings.

Secondly, most of the conceptual metaphor in English idioms related to dogs are linked with negative metaphorical meaning, such as dead dog, dogs eat dogs etc. But there are still a small number of idioms that have positive metaphorical meanings. That is to say, there are both “GOOD PEOPLE ARE DOGS” and “BAD PEOPLE ARE DOGS” conceptual metaphor in English idioms. This is a reflection of the shift of people’s attitudes towards dog in English culture. But, people’s attitude towards dogs remains the same in Chinese culture. That is, most of the conceptual metaphor in Chinese idioms related to dogs are associated with negative metaphorical meaning. For example, the Chinese idioms “狗皮膏药”, “狗眼看人低”, “蝇营狗苟” etc. Take the idiom “蝇营狗苟” as a more detailed example. This idiom is used to refer to people who are shameless like dogs in order to chase fame and wealth.

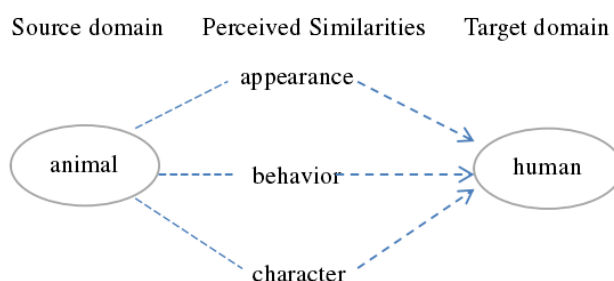
Finally, although there are overlapped conceptual metaphors in English and Chinese, such as “FAITHFUL PEOPLE ARE DOGS”, “STUBBORN PEOPLE ARE DOGS” etc. There are also many differences, which are related with the specific cultural conceptual metaphor and also show the influence of English and Chinese cultural differences. For example, dog is conceptualized as inferior and servile people in Chinese. This is similar to the past western world. At that time, dogs are used to guard doors when people go out. The dogs did not have kennels and they did not have enough food. They live a miserable and unhappy life. Accordingly, people associate dogs with the negative meanings of misery and unhappiness. Thus, there are English idioms, such as “live a dog’s life”, “dead dog” etc. However, in modern English culture, dogs have become people’s friends and acquired the positive meaning, such as “love me, love my dog”.

#### 4.1.2 Primary Metaphors in Animal Idioms

Just as what have been discussed above, primary metaphors, grounded in people’s universal embodied experience, are considered as the universal aspect of conceptual metaphor, which can be found the same or have similarity in the world’s languages. Thousands of animal idioms are indispensable in human life. Based on the analysis of conceptual metaphors of representative animals in animal idioms, two primary metaphors related to animals can be abstracted.

The first type is the personified metaphor. Whether “FAITHFUL PEOPLE ARE DOGS”, “STUBBORN PEOPLE ARE DOGS”, “MISERABLE PEOPLE ARE DOGS”; or “DISABLED PEOPLE ARE DOGS”, “HAPPY PEOPLE ARE DOGS”, “SERVILE PEOPLE ARE DOGS”, they all come from a highly generalized metaphor “HUMAN BEINGS ARE ANIMALS”. Based on the close

relationship between human beings and animals, human beings are familiar with almost every aspect of animals, such as appearance, behaviors and characters. All of these can be used to mapping. Figure 1 is able to show the process:



**Figure 1. Mapping between Animals and Human**

On top of the personified conceptual metaphor “HUMAN BEINGS ARE ANIMALS”, there is also a subtype of impersonal conceptual metaphor: “SOCIAL NEGATIVE THINGS ARE DOGS”. And according to Kovecses’ (2002) description of animal metaphors, one conceptual metaphor is DIFFICULT-TO-HANDLE THINGS ARE DOGS. Considering the characteristics of other animals, another highly generalized animal metaphor in idioms can be abstracted as ABSTRACT THINGS ARE ANIMALS. Because people also use animal to express abstract thoughts, ideas and hopes.

#### 4.2 Classification of Conceptual Metaphors in English and Chinese Animal Idioms

The conceptual metaphors in English and Chinese animal idioms can be classified into many types according to different criterion. In this section, it will sort out the different types of conceptual metaphors in English and Chinese animal idioms. The discussions mainly involve the following two classifying perspectives: the perspective of theoretical framework and the perspective of the features of mapping.

##### 4.2.1 The Classification of Conceptual Metaphors from the Perspective of Theoretical Framework

Just as what we have discussed in Chapter Three, conceptual metaphor can be divided into three types according to Lakoff’s theory: structural metaphors, ontological metaphors and orientational metaphors. The conceptual metaphor in animal idioms also falls into the above categories. The followings are some details and examples.

##### 4.2.1.1 Structural Metaphors in English and Chinese Animal Idioms

Structural metaphor refers to the use of one concept to construct another concept, and its metaphor theme is “the source domain provides a relatively rich knowledge structure for the target domain”. Although the two concepts used in structural metaphor are different in nature, there are regular correspondences between their internal structures. This part will illustrate the structural metaphors in animal idioms by taking the animal idioms of Dog/狗, Horse/马 and Fish/鱼 in English and Chinese

as examples

(1) Dog/狗:

As mentioned above, the animal idioms related with dogs use some conceptual metaphors, such as “HUMAN BEINGS ARE ANIMALS”, “SOCIAL NEGATIVE THINGS ARE DOGS”, and “DIFFICULT-TO-HANDLE THINGS ARE DOGS”. It is obvious that there is also structural metaphor in English and Chinese animal idioms related to dogs. As for the conceptual metaphor “HUMAN BEINGS ARE ANIMALS”, there are “FAITHFUL PEOPLE ARE DOGS”, “STUBBORN PEOPLE ARE DOGS”, or “MISERABLE PEOPLE ARE DOGS” etc. In detail, the conceptual metaphor “MISERABLE PEOPLE ARE DOGS” can be expressed differently in English and Chinese, such as the English idioms “to lead a dog’s life” and “to die like a dog”, the Chinese idiom “丧家犬”. In this way, we understand the conceptual metaphor “MISERABLE PEOPLE ARE DOGS”. Likewise, we can use various types of conceptual metaphors such as “MISERABLE PEOPLE ARE DOGS” and “FAITHFUL PEOPLE ARE DOGS” to understand the conceptual metaphor of “HUMAN BEING ARE ANIMALS”. For each conceptual metaphor, there are many different expressions in English and Chinese. This is how animal idioms use structural metaphors to construct their mappings. Below is Table 1. Some Examples of the Mappings of Dog Idioms:

**Table 1. Some Examples of the Mappings of Dog Idioms**

Conceptual metaphors	Animal idioms in English	Animal idioms in Chinese
MISERABLE PEOPLE ARE DOGS	To lead a dog’s life To die like a dog	丧家之犬
FAITHFUL PEOPLE ARE DOGS	As faithful as a dog Die dog for someone	犬马之劳
STUBBORN PEOPLE ARE DOGS	The scalded dog fears cold water Dog returns to its vomit	狗改不了吃屎 狗不咬人心不安
HAPPY PEOPLE ARE DOGS	A dog with two tails	No correspondence
HUMBLE PEOPLE ARE DOGS	No correspondence	犬子 犬舍

(2) Horse/马:

Some conceptual metaphors of the horse in English and Chinese animal idioms are shown in the Table 2.

**Table 2. Some Examples of the Mappings of Horse Idioms**

Conceptual metaphors	Animal idioms in English	Animal idioms in Chinese
HARD WORKERS ARE HORSES	Work like a horse	当牛做马
STRONG PEOPLE ARE HORSES	A willing horse	汗马功劳
HIGH SPIRIT IS HORSE	As strong as a horse	人高马大
ILLNESS IS HORSE	Have the like of horse	人高马强
FLATTERING IS HORSE	On a high horse	龙马精神
	As sick as a horse	No correspondence
	No correspondence	拍马屁、马屁精

(3) Fish/鱼:

Some conceptual metaphors of the fish in English and Chinese animal idioms are shown in the Table 3.

**Table 3. Some Examples of the Mappings of Fish Idioms**

Conceptual metaphors	Animal idioms in English	Animal idioms in Chinese
HELPLESS PEOPLE ARE FISH	A fish out of water	涸辙枯鱼
HARVEST IS FISH	If you swear, you will catch no fish	临渊羡鱼
DEATH IS FISH	Sleep with the fishes	葬身鱼腹
OPPORTUNITY IS FISH	Lots of good fish in the sea	No correspondence
CORRESPONDENCE IS FISH	No correspondence	鱼传尺素
		雁素鱼笺

#### 4.2.1.2 Ontological Metaphors in English and Chinese Animal Idioms

Ontological metaphor is created by using entities and examples. Humans have developed a variety of understandings about animals through their long contact with them. As a result, people tend to make use of animal idioms to express some experiences, such as characteristics, behaviors, emotions, attitudes etc. Theoretically speaking, there are two subtypes of ontological metaphor: personification metaphor and container metaphor.

In English and Chinese animal idioms, people tend to regard animals as human beings. Therefore, the personified metaphor is a generalized category covering a large number of metaphors. Each of these metaphors uses different aspects of people or uses different ways of looking at people. For example, the animal idioms “rat face” and “尖嘴猴腮” both remind people of ugly appearance of “rat” and “猴”. Besides, people also notice that there are similarities between themselves and animals in terms of behaviors. The animal “monkey” is a good case in point. Monkey is usually regarded as the object of contemplation and amusement. Therefore, the meaning of English idiom “make a monkey out of sb” is

laughing at someone else. That is to let a person become the object of amusement just like the monkey. And in Chinese, “狼吞虎咽” is used to describe the act of eating very aggressively and quickly, just as wolves and tigers do when they enjoy their prey.

Besides personified metaphor, container metaphor is another type of ontological metaphor. “We are physical beings, bound by the surface of our skin, separated from the rest of the world, and the world we experience is outside of us”. Everyone is like a container with a surface to distinguish the parts that go in and out. We can also project this process onto other physical objects that are also surrounded by surfaces. Animal idioms are the same. Thus we have the conceptual metaphor “ANIMAL IS A CONTAINER”. We can put in the attitudes, feelings, emotions and relationships, and think of the animal as a container with an inward and outward orientation. The English idioms “put on the dog”, “Have the butterflies in sb’s stomach” are the very examples.

#### 4.2.1.3 Orientational Metaphors in English and Chinese Animal Idioms

Different from structural metaphor and ontological metaphor, orientational metaphor has a whole conceptual system. These metaphors are orientational because most of them have to do with spatial orientation. For example, the concept of “HAPPY” is “UP” oriented, which gives rise to the expression “I’m feeling UP today”. In addition to structural metaphor and ontological metaphor, there are also orientational metaphor in English and Chinese animal idioms. But compared with the preceding two types, orientational metaphor is not that much. The following is Table 4.

**Table 4. Some Examples of Orientational Metaphor in English and Chinese Animal Idioms**

Conceptual metaphors	English animal idioms	Chinese animal idioms
UP IS VIVTORY	Top dog	鲤鱼跃龙门
UP IS HIGH SPIRIT	Back up	No correspondence
DOWN IS DEFEAT	Underdog	No correspondence
DOWN IS CAUTIOUSNESS	No correspondence	鹿伏鹤行

#### 4.2.2 The Classification of Conceptual Metaphors from the Perspective of the Features of Mappings

Animals is one of the indispensable parts of human beings’ society. The mechanism of conceptual metaphor is the mapping from the source domain to the target domain. It is the use of an easily understood, concrete, tangible thing to understand another not easily understood, abstract, intangible thing. Since animals are part of human world and humans are familiar with them, they are usually used as the sorource domain to help people to understand abstract concept. However, the mapping of the animal source domain to the target domain is not arbitrary. The mapping will be successful, only when the two conceptual domains have a certain degree of similarity. Moreover, these similarities include both the intrinsic similarities and the cultural similarities. Under the influence of these two kinds of

similarities, there are different types of conceptual metaphors in English and Chinese animal idioms. This part is the discussion of this kind of classification.

#### 4.2.2.1 Mappings of Animal's Intrinsic Properties

The mappings of animal's intrinsic properties is mainly based on the objective similarities between human beings and animals and is less likely to be influenced by the specific cognition of a nation and people's subjective thoughts. The intrinsic properties involve the following aspects: appearance, behaviors, characters, habits and instincts of animals etc.

##### (1) The mappings of appearance in animal idioms:

People's most immediate and obvious experience of animals is their appearance, and this is the starting point for observation. All kinds of animals differ in body condition and appearance. In fact, human beings are mammals in nature. Thus, the appearance of animals can be easily mapped to human beings. For example, the English idioms "rat face", "hang-dog look", "bee's knee", "she is a fox". All reflect the appearance of animals. Likewise, we can also find many Chinese idioms that reflect the same thing, such as "龙眉凤目", "龙威燕颌", "贼眉鼠眼", "马脸" etc. In addition, the animal image "tiger" can also be used to prove the mapping of animal appearance. The tiger has a strong body and sharp teeth, which gives people a formidable image. In particular, the "wang" pattern on the tiger's forehead highlights the image of authority and majesty. Therefore, people often map the majestic image of the tiger to human beings. Then a lot of idioms have been created, such as "虎视鹰扬", "燕颌虎颈" etc.

##### (2) The mappings of behaviors in animal idioms:

Human beings' behaviors seem to be able to be explained by the behaviors of animals. Different kinds of animals have different instinctual behaviors. And these behaviors can help people express different meanings. Such as the English idioms: have a wolf in the stomach; worm one's way, cat foot, lead a dog's life, at snail's pace. While there are "狼吞虎咽", "鲸吞蚕食", "狗拿耗子", "兔子急了也咬人" in Chinese idioms. To be more specific in the example of "cat foot", the cat walks in an enchanting manner. This kind of reflection on human body is used to describe the catwalk of human beings just like a cat, which gives people a sense of spirituality. And in the example of "狗拿耗子": Generally speaking, it is natural for cats to catch mice because cats and mice are natural enemies. But dogs do what cats should do, which is reflected in the human body. That is, someone does things that are not within their responsibilities.

##### (3) The mapping of living habits in animal idioms

People are familiar with the living habits of animals, which encourages people to use these familiar points to express abstract ideas. For example, He eats like a bird. Birds are small and eat a little food. This feature is mapped onto human beings, then appearing the expression "eat like a bird". It means a people eats a little food just like a bird. Besides, dogs and cats fight with each other, so the idiom "dog and cat" means dogs and cats stay together and fight constantly. Then it has the metaphorical meaning—fight continuously. There are also other examples in English and Chinese idioms, such as "a

fish out of water”, “see the wolf to keep the sheep”, “a fox’s sleep”, “饿虎扑羊”, “倦鸟归巢” etc.

#### (4) Mapping of body states in animal idioms

The physical states of animals can also be mapped to humans, metaphorically referring to people with similar physical states. In some animal idioms, human beings’ physical conditions are closely related to their figures. For example, the Chinese idioms “力大如牛”, “牛人人大”, “手无缚鸡之力”, “螳螂挡臂”, and the English idioms “as strong as a horse”, “to have the like of a horse” etc. To be more specific in the example of “鸡” in Chinese, chicken has acquired the metaphorical meaning of being thin and weak, because chickens are mostly small in size and lack defense against the outside world. Therefore, Chinese people always use the phrase “手无缚鸡之力” to signify the weak body and small strength.

#### (5) Mapping of animal characters in animal idioms

In the long-term communication with animals, people have different impressions on different animals. For example, pigs are dirty and rude; foxes are cunning; dogs are loyal or inferior, etc. Accordingly, these features of animals have been metaphorically applied and mapped to depict human beings, and a large number of animal idioms have been produced. Take the phrase “work like a horse” as an example. In ancient times, horses were often used to pull carts. Therefore, horses are symbols of speed and strength in people’s cognition. So the hard working characteristics of horses are mapped to people to express the metaphorical meaning of working hard and not complaining. The following idioms also include the mapping of animal characters: lead a dog’s life, to die dog for someone, snake in the grass, chicken out, as timid as a mouse, bull-headed, hold your horse, 狼心狗肺, 对牛弹琴, 凤毛鸡胆, 肝胆如鼠.....

#### 4.2.2.2 Mappings of Animal’s Cultural Properties

Human interaction with animals takes place in specific cultures. So people’s perception of animals is influenced by specific cultures. To be more specific, Culture endows animals with special cultural attributes, which are mapped to the target domain and form specific metaphorical meanings in animal idioms. The mappings of animal’s cultural properties mainly includes the following aspects:

##### (1) Mapping of religion in animal idioms

Language is the carrier of culture, so is religion. In western culture, people believe in Christianity. Thus the Bible of Christianity exert a great influence on western culture, thus producing all kinds of animal idioms that are related with Christianity. Sheep is more of a reflection of religion than any other animal. For example, God is referred to as shepherd and the sons of God are sheep in English. Most of the English idioms that are related with sheep come from Bible. The goat is the embodiment of vice while the sheep is for goodness in Bible. Thus a lot of idioms have been created: go from hero to goat, separate sheep from goat. The animal “goat” also has the metaphorical meaning of womanizer, which derives from the Pan, the shepherd god in ancient Greek mythology. Pan takes in charge of shepherd and likes to flirt with women, thus the animal “goat” getting the negative meaning, such as “play the giddy goat (行为如小丑)”. Moreover, dogs, which have been discussed in details in the previous

sections, are regarded as dirty animals in Bible. There are some English animal idioms related with this negative meaning, such as “a dog returns to his vomit”, “go to the dogs”. However, Buddhism, which is the dominant religion in China, has little influence on animal idioms.

#### (2) Mapping of social conventions and values in animal idioms

Social customs and values are also important parts of human culture, including social etiquette, superstitious activities and so on. For example, cats are often associated with witches in western culture. Therefore, cats has acquired the metaphorical meaning of myth and superstition, such as the English idioms “a cat has nine lives”. According to the previous discussion, dogs were considered inferior in the early Western culture. Nevertheless, western people regard dogs as the faithful friend nowadays. And the study of Wang Guijuan (2021) shows that most of the English idioms related with “dogs” are positive, such as “a lucky dog”, “a dog’s chance”, “love me, love my dog”, “every dog has its day” etc. But in Chinese culture, dogs are a kind of common domestic pet. So dogs are often associated with negative images such as obedience and are regarded as a metaphor for bad people or evil deeds. For example, there are “狗仗人势”, “狗眼看人低”, “看门狗”, “狗腿子”, “狗仗人势”, “疯狗乱咬人” in Chinese idioms. All of these examples show the negative meaning of “狗”, which is related to the not positive meaning in Chinese social conventions and values.

#### (3) Mapping of literary works and allegories in animal idioms

Literary works and fables are also important parts of a country’s culture and have had a significant influence on the formation of animal idioms. And under the influence of literary works, animal idioms have obvious characteristics. Just as the Bible that we have discussed in the previous part, it has great influence on English animal idioms. There are also animal idioms that are influenced by literary works, such as “井底之蛙”.

### 4.3 *The Comparison between English and Chinese Animal Idioms from Metaphorical Perspective*

The universality of conceptual metaphor brings similarities to different languages, which can be reflected in the primary metaphor. Naturally, cultural differences in conceptual metaphors bring differences to different languages and cultures. The analysis of these differences are necessary, because the understanding of differences can help learners learn to analyze animal idioms in order to overcome the difficulties encountered in language learning.

#### 4.3.1 The Similarities of Metaphorical Mappings between English and Chinese Idioms

Many of the previous examples have shown the similarities between English and Chinese in using animal idioms to describe humans. If we conduct a deep research, we find the underlying reasons of these similarities. In this section, we will try to study these reasons.

First of all, animals have their own specific biological characteristics, such as living habits, appearance and so on, no matter what language background they belong to. These features are relatively stable and not easily changed. That is to say, the same animal presents the similar intrinsic properties to people of different cultures. Secondly, there are some similarities in people’s living environment no matter where



they live and what they do. Thirdly, humans have similar physical structures and cognitive abilities, which will inevitably bring about similar embodied experience.

Therefore, human beings may have similar ways of thinking and values due to the similarities of biological characteristics, people's living environment and cognitive abilities. As a result, there are similarities between animal metaphors in English and Chinese animal idioms. For example, both Chinese and English people hate mouse. Then the animal "rat" get the derogatory metaphorical meaning. In Chinese, there are "鼠目寸光", "胆小如鼠", "过街老鼠人人喊打". In English, there are some expressions like "as timid as a mouse". The slow speed of snail is widely recognized among Chinese and English people. Then snail gets the metaphorical meaning of slow speed and there are expressions like "as a snail's pace". In addition, the similarities of metaphorical mapping between English and Chinese idioms also include the stubbornness of donkey, the cunning of fox, the cruelty of wolf, the darkness of crow, the diligence of bees, the tender of lamb and the smartness of monkey and so on. It can be seen that the commonalities in people's production, life and thought have influenced the construction of animal idioms in the process of the development of human civilization.

#### 4.3.2 The Differences of Metaphorical Mappings between English and Chinese Idioms

There are many differences in animal metaphors, which give rise to different metaphorical meanings which may produce the obstacles of learning animal idioms for learners. The metaphorical mapping of English and Chinese animal idioms is mainly different in the following ways.

##### (1) The same source domain to the different target domains

This type means that English and Chinese idioms use the same animal image as their source domain. But in the process of mapping, different aspects of animals are stresses due to the cultural differences, thus producing the different mapping contents to the target domain. In English and Chinese animal idioms, typical example of this type is turtle. In English culture, the slow speed of turtles is emphasized when mapping to the target domain. Thus, there are expressions like "move like a herd of turtles". But in Chinese culture, the longevity of turtle is emphasized in the target domain. Thus turtle is often regarded as the symbol of longevity, such as "龟年鹤寿".

Another example is dragon. The animal "dragon" is a kind of auspicious animal in Chinese and tends to refer to male person. Dragon is an important imaginary animal in Chinese traditional culture and a representative of national spirit. It is an ideological symbol and totem of the Chinese people, representing the human worship of good weather and harvest. Therefore, Chinese people refer to themselves as "龙的传人". In ancient times, the emperor was "真龙天子". And the parents are all "望子成龙". Everyone wants to be able to become "人中龙凤". There are also other idioms to show people's good wishes, such as "龙凤呈祥", "龙腾虎跃". To conclude, dragon is the symbol of happiness and luck in Chinese culture. However, dragon is the embodiment of Satan and the symbol of cruelty and vice in English culture. Therefore, there are some expressions like "dragon's teeth", "here be dragon".

## (2) The different source domains to the same target domain

The second type is that the different source domains are mapped to the same target domain. That is to say, people regard the different animal images from the two languages as the source domain and map to the same target domain, generating the same metaphorical meaning. For example, the English idiom “lock the stable after the horse is stolen” is equivalent to the Chinese idiom “亡羊补牢”. In Chinese idiom, the animal “羊” is used as source domain but the English use the animal “horse”. And when it comes to doing things in his own way and not thinking about the consequences, Chinese use the idiom “杀鸡取卵” and English use “kill a goose that lays the golden eggs”. Although the metaphorical meanings of these two idioms are the same, they use different source domains. Chinese uses “鸡” and English uses “goose”. Besides, Chinese people use “瓮中捉鳖” to express the situation that someone is in trouble. While English use the idiom “a rat in a hole”. The two language use “鳖” and “rat” respectively. There are also some idioms, such as “宁为鸡头，不做凤尾 (better be the head of a dog than the tail of a lion)”, “落汤鸡 (as wet as a drowned rat)”, “虎头蛇尾 (In like a lion, out like a lamb)”, “犟得像头牛 (As stubborn as a mule)”.

## (3) The unique mapping in English or Chinese animal idioms

This unique mapping means that the mapping from the source domain to the target domain is unique to English or Chinese culture. That is to say, there is no equivalence in another culture. For example, “Wolf” is a familiar animal image in both English and Chinese, and there are a large number of animal idioms related with “wolf”. But the English idiom “keep the wolf from the door” is mapped to the target domain as scraping by, avoiding hunger. There is no corresponding mapping in Chinese, because wolves are mainly mapped as dangerous and cruel in Chinese. Therefore, there is no corresponding animal idiom. Other examples, such as “white elephant” have no correspondence in Chinese.

In addition, the Chinese animal image “鲤鱼” has no equivalent animal image in English. “鲤鱼” is often mapped to success or promotion through hard work, such as “鲤鱼跃龙门”. But in English, carp could cause ecological problems in Western countries. As for the Chinese expression “只羡鸳鸯不羡仙”, the animal “mandarin duck” has no corresponding meaning in English. The expression “春蚕到死丝方尽” is something that westerners can’t understand.

To sum up, these culture-specific metaphorical mappings are very important for learning animal idioms, because it may cause learners to have difficulties in learning animal idioms.

### 4.3.3 The Analysis of Factors Causing Differences in Metaphorical Mapping between English and Chinese Idioms

As can be seen from the comparative analysis of previous examples, there are many similarities between English and Chinese animal metaphors, but there are also some differences. The latter needs more explanation. Thus, this section mainly discusses the underlying reasons for these differences. By exploring the reasons for the differences of conceptual metaphors in English and Chinese animal idioms, we can provide motivation and convenience for understanding animal idioms. Through the

careful research, this thesis finds that the differences of metaphor mapping between English and Chinese animal idioms mainly can be explained by the following reasons.

#### 4.3.3.1 The Influence of Geographical Environment

As the basis of human existence, natural geographical environment determines the basic characteristics of its culture largely, which influences people's way of thinking, and thus naturally influences the generation of animal idioms. Therefore, people living in different areas often describe the same thing or phenomenon with different thoughts. The animal "tiger" is a good case in point. Tigers mainly live in Eurasia rather than Western Europe and the Americas. Thus, people who live in Eurasia have a lot of contact with tigers. And there are a lot of idioms about the animal "tiger" in Chinese, such as "养虎为患", "虎视鹰扬", "燕颌虎颈", "放虎归山". Comparatively, the British, who live far away from tigers, do not have as much knowledge and information about tigers. So there are very few English idioms that are related with tiger.

Besides, Britain is a maritime state and fish is the main food of English people. Thus, there are many idioms that are related with fishes in English, such as, "dull fish", "drink like a fish", "cool fish", and "red herring". To be more specific with "red herring", it is used to refer to things that mislead others. Conventionally, red herring refers to herring that has been pickled. Xiang Yafang (2021) argues that when hunting, red herrings are tethered in the forest with lines, and their pungent scent masks other scents to confuse hounds trained to hunt for foxes. Therefore, without referring to the specific knowledge about red herrings, the specific meaning of this idiom is hard to understand. However, there is no correspondent idiom in Chinese because China is agricultural civilization and people live on land. Cattle, which is particularly important to Chinese farmers, has many related idioms in Chinese and is often regarded as an animal that people respect and love very much, such as "力大如牛", "牛毛细雨", "牛气冲天", "牛人", "小试牛刀", "当牛做马", "九牛一毛", "汗牛充栋"... In these examples, the animal "牛" shows the positive metaphorical meaning of strength and respect.

The examples discussed above indicate that different countries have different geographical environment, thus having different climate. That has a great influence on the lifestyle of people, thus leading to different recognitions of people toward animals.

#### 4.3.3.2 The Influence of Religious Belief

Religion is a major component of the cultural system. Under the influence of religious belief, there are many unique idiomatic expressions in English and Chinese. In western countries, people believe in Christianity and God, thus producing many idiomatic animal expressions that are related with religion. For example, "a lion in the path", "lion lies down with the lamb", "separate sheep from goat" etc. In China, Buddhism is the main religion. Under the influence of Buddhism, almost all animal idioms related to religion in English are absent in Chinese.

#### 4.3.3.3 The Influence of Dietary Habits

Eastern and Western people have different dietary habits, which makes English and Chinese have different expressions of animal idioms. Chinese people prefer pork and mutton. Thus, there are a lot of idioms about pig and sheep in Chinese, such as “没吃过猪肉，但见过猪跑”，“顺手牵羊”，“挂羊头卖狗肉”，“亡羊补牢”.

While the meat that Westerners usually eat is chicken, beef and fish. Nowadays, KFC, which is famous for selling chicken products and very popular in the whole world, is even a household name. As a result, there are many idioms are related with chicken in English, like “chicken head”, “chickenhearted”, and “talk turkey”. Among these examples, “chicken head” is used to refer to silly and foolish person. The English idiom “chickenhearted” means timid and hare hearted. Moreover, “talk turkey” refers to talking frankly and straightforwardly or getting down to business.

#### 4.3.3.4 The Influence of Literary Works and Legend

Literary works and legends are some of the main literary forms used to express a country's culture. Through these forms, the writers express their thoughts and feelings. In English, the classic works of William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens, Aesop's Fables, Eden myths and Legends, not only enrich the English culture, but also exert great influence on English animal idioms. For example, “a horse of different color” comes from Shakespeare's Twelfth Night; “every dog has its day” comes from Shakespeare's Henry IV. Fables have also had a strong influence on animal idioms in English, such as “a wolf in sheep's clothing”, “lion's share”, “snake in one's bosom”. In Chinese, animal idioms associated with literary works and legends have “狐假虎威”, “精卫填海”, “杯弓蛇影” ...

In addition, the image of the snake is also a good example. Originally, the snake was called “Xiao long” in Chinese culture, an animal with a status second only to the dragon. Because of the great image of the snake, the most representative Chinese ancestors “Nuwa” and “Fuxi” are both human head and snake body in traditional Chinese culture. And the snake characters in Chinese mythology, such as Lady White and Xiaoqing, are beautiful female figures. However, snake is the symbol of cruelty and vice in western culture. Because Satan, a demonic figure in the Bible, lured Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of wisdom in the Garden of Eden in the form of a snake, so that human beings were driven out of the Garden of Eden and suffered all kinds of sufferings in the world. Take the English idiom “snake in the grass” as an example. It means a stab in the back or a lurking enemy.

Based on the above discussions, we can see that specific literary works and legends in different cultures have a very important influence on animal idioms.

#### 4.3.3.5 The Influence of Historical Background

In ancient China, there is a rigid and strict hierarchy. Among various animal images, “dog” is often used to represent ordinary people, while “dragon” is associated with emperors or superiors, and “tiger” is linked with strong and powerful people. Therefore, there are many expressions related to “dog”, “dragon” and “tiger” in Chinese, such as “虎门无犬子”. In this idiom, the animal “dog” is the source

domain and human beings are the target domain. Thus, the metaphorical meaning is that “humble people are dogs”, which reflects the position of “dog” in China. That is why many expressions in Chinese have negative connotations about dogs or dog-related concepts.

On the other hand, most of the English people have a positive impression on dogs under the influence of historical background, which results in a large number of positive comments on dogs. This is the corresponding metaphorical meaning produced in the corresponding historical background.

#### 4.3.3.6 The Influence of Social Customs

Social customs are the sum total of custom norms, etiquette and thoughts produced in the long social life and handed down from generation to generation. In the historical process of human cultural development, language and social customs depend on and influence each other. Language is the carrier and medium of social customs. And social customs are directly reflected in language and constantly influence the development of language and people’s attitudes towards the same thing. The most obvious example influenced by social customs in Chinese and English animal idioms is the animal “dragon”. In Chinese, dragon is endowed with positive meaning, which is sacred and noble. Dragon is also the symbol of national spirit. Thus there are many relevant idioms in Chinese, such as “望子成龙”, “真龙天子”, “龙马精神”.

But in English, dragon is associated with negative meaning. It is cruel, sinful and savage. For example, “here be dragons” means there are monsters and dangers to warn people not to go. Under the influence of social customs, the metaphorical meaning of “dragon” is quite different in Chinese and English culture. In Chinese, “dragon” is noble and sacred, but it is savage and cruel in English, thus producing different animal idioms related with “dragon”.

The second example is “dog”. England is an island country and English people live by fishing or hunting. Thus, dogs are their hunting helpers. Then dog gets the metaphorical meaning of “helper” and appears many idioms, such as “a good dog deserves his bone”. While China is an agricultural country, dogs are mainly used to guard doors when people go out. Therefore, there are some idioms like “看门狗”, “狐朋狗友”, “狗急跳墙”, “狗咬吕洞宾, 不识好人心”. Under the influence of social customs, English people have a genuine affection for dogs, resulting in meanings that are more positive. However, Chinese people attach negative meanings to dogs.

## 5. Conclusion

From the theoretical perspective of conceptual metaphor, this thesis makes a comprehensive analysis of English and Chinese animal idioms. The main findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

From a cognitive point of view, there are two main types of conceptual metaphors in animal idioms. One is the primary metaphor: “HUMAN BEINGS ARE ANIMALS”. The other is a subtype: “ABSTRACT THINGS ARE ANIMALS”. Besides, there are three types of conceptual metaphors in English and Chinese animal idioms. That is, structural metaphors, ontological metaphors and

orientational metaphors. Conceptual metaphor can also be classified according to the features of mapping. Namely, the mapping of animals' intrinsic properties and mapping of animals' cultural properties.

Considering the unity and cultural differences in metaphor, the differences in conceptual metaphor between English and Chinese animal idioms cannot be ignored. This thesis summarizes the similarities and differences between English and Chinese animal idioms, and summarizes three types of differences: the same source domain to the different target domains, the different source domains to the same target domain and the unique mapping in English or Chinese animal idioms. The recognition of these differences can help learners to overcome the major obstacles in their learning.

Finally, this thesis explores the deep causes of the similarities and differences between English and Chinese animal idioms. There are many reasons. The common characteristics of animal and human as well as the similar physiological and psychological basis may lead to the similar understandings of English and Chinese animal idioms. At the same time, the characteristics of the two cultures also lead to the differences between English and Chinese animal metaphors. By analyzing the differences between Chinese and English animal idioms, this thesis found that the differences were mainly caused by the following factors: geographical environment, religious belief, dietary habits, literary works, historical background and social customs.

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