

Metonymy for PERSON in English and Chinese: A cross-language perspective

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This paper explores the cross-language variation in metonymic patterns/sources for the target PERSON between Chinese and English. In Cognitive Linguistics, to prove that metonymy is a fundamental cognitive process in everyday life and to show that metonymy is derived from human life and bodily experience, much emphasis has been given to the ubiquity and universality of metonymy (e.g. Radden, 2005). In line with this approach, universally valid source domains have been suggested for specific target categories, e.g. ATTRIBUTE/CLOTHING/BODYPART for PERSON (Kleparski, 1997). However, the culture/language-specific diversity, which has been widely recognized as relevant for metaphor research (Geeraerts & Grondelaers, 1995; Kövecses, 2005), is still largely ignored in metonymy research (for exceptions see e.g. Barcelona, 2003). The aim of this paper is to answer the question: To what extent are the metonymies for a certain target in English different from Chinese and why?

We extracted 1821 Chinese metonymic expressions for PERSON from two Chinese metonymy dictionaries, and manually coded their sources and sub-targets (e.g. SOLDIER, SERVANT) at different levels of schematicity. The *Historical Thesaurus of the OED* was used to build the English equivalents by translating the sub-targets from Chinese into English and then searching for them, as well as the lemma person, in the thesaurus. We finally collected 1329 English metonymic expressions for PERSON. Statistic techniques (e.g. Fisher's exact test) were employed to compare the distributions of different sources between two languages, in relation to the different sub-targets of PERSON. Then, cross-linguistic variations found in the dataset were checked against the cultural-social background.

We have found cross-linguistic variations in metonymies for PERSON. The variations are influenced by many cultural-pertinent factors to a large extent:

- the preference of stereotypes in Chinese culture might have been responsible for the larger number of metonymies under the pattern INDIVIDUAL FOR COLLECTION FOR PERSON in Chinese;
- the Chinese carriage-clothing system has led to the preference of the pattern PIECE OF CLOTHING FOR PERSON in general as well as several sources under POSSESSED FOR POSSESSOR (e.g. CARRIAGE, FLAG) in Chinese;
- the popularization of Chinese metonymies under LOCATION FOR LOCATED may also have been indebted to the regulations on location/residence in feudal China;
- culture-bound body parts are found for each language. In English, HEAD and BRAIN are common sources for targets in the domain of INTELLIGENCE, like UNWISE PERSON, while the Chinese aesthetic appreciation of females has triggered the abundant metonymies with the source of FACIAL PARTS (especially, EYEBROWS);
- social patterns (individualism vs. collectivism) may have also influence on the preference of the source NONPHYSICAL CHARACTERISTIC/STATE in English and the sources CLOTHING/LOCATION in Chinese respectively.

This study intends to draw people's attention to the culture-specific diversities in metonymy between two languages with different cultural backgrounds. The cognitive, communication principles and culture elements jointly shaped the metonymic conceptualization of PERSON.

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