How metaphor and metonymy are used in Chinese and English ceramic discourse?

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This study aims to identify and compare the uses of metaphor and metonymy in Chinese and English ceramic discourse, based on two self-complied ceramic corpora. With profound artistic forms, ceramic texts have been considered as an important metaphorical carrier to symbolize and explicate artistic conceptualization, yet few studies have been dedicated to analyzing the linguistic characters of the artistic discourse, and not much has been done to tease out the metaphorical strategies and conceptual mappings in ceramic texts.

For the cross-linguistic comparison, two self-built ceramic corpora are compiled from academic articles that were published between 1980 and 2000, all of which specifically describe ceramic works from different aspects such as culture, history and art. This study will identify metaphors by means of Metaphor Identification Procedure VU University Amsterdam (MIPVU, Steen et al, 2010), which has been proved to be reliable in metaphor identification in various texts (Lu & Wang, 2017). Additionally, two reference ceramic glossaries were selected for detecting common ceramic metaphors and metonymies in ceramic jargon, based on which the texts in corpora were divided into five categories according to the objects of their descriptions, which included shape, color, size, texture and surface pattern.

Preliminary findings show that human cognition of ceramic art is largely influenced by the conceptualization of the universe and natural entities in both languages. A porcelain piece can be perceived as a Universe, a Person, an Animal, a Plant, or a Cloud. In ceramic shape descriptions, human, animal and plant are the most frequently used source domains. For example, *měirén jiān "美人肩"* (lit., beauty's shoulders vase) is a type of porcelain that has a similar body shape to a beautiful woman. In color descriptions, animal, plant and natural phenomenon are the most frequently used source domains, such as *méizǐ qīng 梅子青* (lit., plum green) and *líuxiá zhǎn 流霞盏* (lit., rosy clouds cup). In size descriptions, human and animal constitute the two main source domains, as in the use of *zhuàng guàn 壮罐* (lit. zhuang jar) which signals the large size of the porcelain as a strong human. In the description of ceramic texture, common objects with specific textual features provide the major source domains. For instance, *luǎnmù bēi 卵幕杯* (lit., eggshell-thin cup) emphasizes the thinness of the porcelain as if it is an eggshell. In addition, the Universe is the most frequently used source domain in surface pattern descriptions. The term *lǜdì baíhuā "绿地白花"* (lit., white-flower decoration on a green ground, a specific decoration pattern) indicates that the contrast between the dark-colored surface and the white flowery design pattern, mirroring the contrast between the plain earth and the colorful flowers.

There are also distinct variations in describing ceramic art between Chinese and English, despite their similar tendencies in choosing the source domains in corresponding texts. For instance, an interesting case of metonymic transfer is that while Chinese uses the color term *green* directly for porcelain with green glaze, English uses "*celadon*", a term originating from a character called Shepherd Celadon, who wares pale green ribbons in a French pastoral romance "*L'Astrée*". Moreover, semantic mismatches between Chinese and English expressions were also revealing. The helmet-shaped porcelain is termed after a human figure as *jiāngjūn guàn 将军罐* (lit., the general's jar) in Chinese but translated into English as 'the general's helmet', to directly signal its unique shape as a helmet. Varied types of metaphorical and metonymic mismatches were distinguished with a discussion of language-specific features. It is suggested that the Chinese mapping strategies tend to be less direct and precise, thus more imaginative and poetic, than the English counterparts.

The study is significant in its investigation of language-specific means of conceptualization in ceramic discourse and cross-linguistic comparison of semantic mismatches between Chinese and English. It is expected to shed new light on the understanding of universal conceptualization patterns in dealing with ceramic art from a cultural-cognitive perspective.

Reference

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