

The Semantic Extension and Generalization of Chess Words and Phrases

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ABSTRACT

With Chinese chess vocabulary and idioms as the research objects, this paper takes an approach of the combinations of traditional word meaning research, cognitive linguistic and cultural linguistics, analyzes the mirror relationship between Chinese chess vocabulary and Chinese chess playing culture. It then sorts out the following conclusions. The prosperity of chess in Chinese history has an important impact on the language and life of society, which has spawned a large number of specialized vocabularies of chess in Chinese. Through these vocabularies, the chess culture is recorded accurately and in detail. Many chess vocabulary eventually enter into the general vocabulary through metaphors and extensions, becoming a common language in society. Words and phrases derived from chess have developed extended and metaphorical meanings beyond the literal meaning, forming a rich metaphorical system. This metaphorical system doesn't appear out of nowhere, but is based on the cognitive concepts of "life is like chess" and "affairs of human life are like chess".

Keywords: *playing chess, semantic extension, generalization, metaphor*

I. INTRODUCTION

As an elegant affair, ancient Go is more common in recreational activities between officials and man of letters, while chess is popular among the lower-level people with its more informal features. The complementarity of the two in the scope of communication has made chess cover a fairly wide range of participating groups and become one of the unique and important cultural and recreational activities of the Chinese nation. The prosperity of chess in Chinese history has an important impact on the language life of society, and it has spawned a large number of specialized vocabulary of chess in Chinese. Through these vocabulary, the culture of playing chess is recorded accurately and in detail. However, what is more interesting is that many chess vocabulary finally enter into the general vocabulary through metaphors and extensions, and become a common language in society. The American linguist Sapir pointed out in the book "Theory of Language — An Introduction to Language Studies": "The content of language, needless to say, is closely related to culture." "The vocabulary of a language more or less faithfully reflects the culture it serves. In this sense, it is completely correct that language history and cultural history proceed along parallel lines" [1]. The scholar Chen Yuan pointed out: "The vocabulary that is not or rare in language is a phenomenon that is not or rare in this social life... On

the contrary, the opposite conclusion is obtained". [2] The number of chess special vocabulary and the extent of its generalization directly reflect the cultural status of chess activities in the social life at that time, highlighting people's familiarity and close relationship with chess culture. When people make extensive use of these generalized terms for daily communication, they must be unconsciously influenced by the cultural thinking of chess. They may unconsciously use the cognitive experience of the game to feel and understand the world around them.

II. SEMANTIC EXTENSION AND GENERALIZATION OF CHESS-LIKE WORDS AND PHRASES

"Ju" ("局", which means the round of playing chess) is a vocabulary closely related to chess activities. In the Han Dynasty, Ban Gu pointed out in his "Yizhi" that "the 'ju' must be upright and foursquare". The Dunhuang manuscript "Qijing" of Northern Zhou Dynasty also said that "the chess pieces are rounded, just like sky; the chessboards are square, just like earth". As for the original meaning of the "ju", most of the academics think that it is unclear in Xu Shen's "Shuowen Jiezi". However, under the word "ju", there is another saying that "The reason for playing game a whole day is to play chess". It points out another meaning of "ju" — "chess game". There is no conclusion as to whether this word is borrowed from

the original meaning or is derived from the original meaning. But it is indeed very common to say chess with "ju". "Chess game" used to refer to a chess board, and one game is one board of chess. The saying of "There has not been exactly the same chess game since ancient times" refers to the complex changes in the game of Go. Coupled with the different personalities and talents of chess players, no chess game has been the same since ancient times. The process of playing chess is divided into three stages: "opening", "middle game" and "end-game". The "opening", also known as "layout", refers to the beginning stage of a game of chess. According to the needs of strategic tactics, the two sides of the game will arrange their positions, dispatch troops and seize strategic points. Later, it generally refers to the start of work, activities, etc., and the word "layout" is also a metaphor for making a comprehensive arrangement of things. "Middle game" refers to the middle stage of the game. After both sides have made strategic arrangements, the layout is ready, that is, to enter the middle game. It also refers to the middle stage of the game or activity. The "end-game" situation in the game consisting of residual forces, the end stage of the chess game, is also a metaphor for the situation after something has failed or society has become chaotic. Saving the "end-game" is also called "playing end-game", which is later extended to refer to the final stage of sports competitions or other activities, such as "the final battle", or a certain activity enters the "ending stage". "Stalemate" refers to the situation where the two sides of the game are in confrontation, metaphorically speaking, things are stuck in a stalemate. The "outcome" and "ending" refer to the final result of playing chess, which is a metaphor for the consequence of things. The "complexion" and "situation" originally refer to the distribution and opposition of the chess pieces of the two parties in a certain stage of the game, and later, they metaphorize the situation and condition of ordinary things. The "part" refers to a part of a chess game, and it also refers to a part of the whole. The "overall situation" and "general situation" refer to an entire board of chess, and they also refer to the entire event activities. The "insider" refers to a person related to playing chess, which is also a metaphor of people who are involved and know the inside information. The "outsider" refers to a person who has nothing to do with playing chess and it is a metaphor of someone who has nothing to do with something. The old saying "The spectators see the chess game better than the players" originally meant that the person watching the chess game knew the chess situation better than the chess player. Now it is more often used as a metaphor: the people involved in a matter is often not as comprehensive and clear as the spectator. As a special term for chess, the "ju", referring to the "chess board", which is a special instrument for chess, can also refer to playing chess itself, such as "game play" and "game". And because chess is a game played in a relatively

complete and independent time (continuous completion) and space (checkerboard) and it is a game following the pre-set and arrangement (rules), according to such semantic characteristics, Chinese has derived "gambling party" ("赌局"), "poker party" ("牌局"), "scam" ("骗局"), "tea party" ("茶局"), "wine party" ("酒局") and "dinner party" ("饭局"). Organizing a party is called "organizing a 'ju'", and "making an appointment"; disturbing other people's arrangements is called "scrambling a 'ju' (making a mess)." These words are not directly related to playing chess. The word formation with "ju" is an extension of people's understanding of the concept of "ju".

III. SEMANTIC EXTENSION AND GENERALIZATION OF CHESS PIECES' WORDS AND PHRASES

In a chess game, the two sides of the game play win or lose the game by placing increasing numbers of chess pieces alternately at the corresponding position on the chessboard (Go), or moving or attacking a certain number of chess pieces on the board alternately (chess). Each piece of chess plays its own role under the control of the chess player's arrangement. People extend this recognition of the chess pieces to the recognition of the individuals (people) in the group relationship, forming the extension meaning of "individuals (people) are chess pieces". Amy Tan's "The Joy Luck Club" wrote: "Ricci messed everything up. Unfortunately, Ricci was still kept in the dark and he even didn't know why. Poor Ricci! I can only be a chess piece in Ma's hands." People's Daily "(1995) Liang Pingbo, member of the Standing Committee of Zhejiang Provincial Party Committee and Minister of Propaganda, said: "Our province is adjacent to Jiangsu. Zhangjiagang's foundation is poor, but in recent years, it moves forward with vigorous strides, which is really commendable... Zhangjiagang is a pawn who crosses the river and goes forward step by step. Many small victories add up to a big one. It keeps expanding its results, convincingly and encouragingly". In the above sentences, the person as an individual is regarded as a "chess piece" or "crossing river pawn". These metaphors are meant to emphasize the individual's passiveness, that is, the individual is manipulated, controlled and utilized, and is unable to get rid of this situation. It is known to all that the highest level of chess piece is the general (commander in chief). The general (commander in chief) sits on both bottom sides of chessboard with the supreme body, and his actions are limited to the nine-grid pattern. The proverb "Don't easily trouble the general" is a metaphor, which means you'd better not call in important people easily when dealing with problems. The lowest level of chess piece in chess is the pawn (soldier), therefore, "the little pawn" is often used to refer to insignificant people in life who are easily manipulated by others. According to

the rule, after the pawn crossed the river boundary, he was only allowed to move forward but not to retreat. Therefore, the "crossing river pawn" is metaphorically referred to as those who desperately move forward with no retreat, or describes those who bravely move forward without fear of sacrifice. On the other hand, after the pawn crossed the river, his maneuverability was strong and his lethality was great. The proverb, "After pawns cross the river, they can be used as vehicles", tells the truth: if a person can cross certain critical stages, he will inevitably exert great energy in the future. Using chess pieces to metaphorize the different values of individuals, a large number of chess metaphoric idioms are formed, so that such idioms can be separated from the chess discourse system to complete conventional speech expressions.

IV. SEMANTIC EXTENSION AND GENERALIZATION OF THE LEXICAL WORDS OF CHESS MOVES

The charm of playing chess lies in the fact that the two parties of the game play chess, make overall arrangement, fight, defense and counterattack until one party wins on the basis of certain rules; this process is unpredictable and the results are infinitely possible. For thousands of years, the literati's perception and understanding of playing chess can be described as profound and thorough. It goes beyond entertainment to aesthetic and philosophical scope. Between heaven and earth, it reflects the Chinese nation's system view, trade-off view, victory and defeat view, which is broad and profound. At the same time, the folk people use the simplest but wise sayings that express the metaphorical connection between chess and real life.

"Zhao" ("着") refers to the chess moves, which originated from Go. "One 'zhao' chess" means "one chess move", and the original meaning of "clever move", "artful move", "smart move", "fool move" and "bad move" are all evaluations of one chess move. Later, it was extended to a step or strategy taken to achieve a certain purpose, such as "what a wonderful clever move", "This is a really dangerous move" and so on. There are infinite possibilities before the end of the game, and each step is related to the change of the situation afterwards. There is a saying goes "The most taboo thing about playing chess is randomness". It is necessary to avoid the passive chess of "making a step first and then seeing how it goes". On the contrary, it pays attention to repeated calculations, prudent actions, and it needs to think about the countermeasures in advance. The proverbs "a false move and every move could be wrong" and "a false move and everything could be lost" not only reflect the dialectical relationship between the local and the whole when playing chess, but also metaphorize that a certain problem in life that has decisive significance to the

overall situation is not handled properly, and as a result, the overall situation fails. What is also related to this is "taking all things into consideration", which refers to doing things with a view to the whole and starting from the overall situation. The phrase "coordinating all the activities of the nation as in a chess game" refers to the comprehensive arrangements, rational layout, mutual cooperation and overall consideration of all departments across the country under the unified leadership of the central government. The phrase "making a game of chess alive" refers to the key steps of chess to make the whole situation run smoothly. It is also a metaphor for a situation that has changed to a better way after major steps of adjustment. The "defensive position" originally refers to the method of being passive and conforming to the other party in Go. In chess, one means the order of chess move; two refers to the passive side of the game. In conventional language expressions, the "defensive position" is extended from the original meaning of "playing chess without taking the lead and taking the initiative" to the meaning of "being flat at the beginning, but with some tricks or room for maneuver later", such as the idiomatic phrase of "leaving room for manoeuvre". What contrasts to "defensive position" is "on the offensive"; the word often metaphorically means "taking the lead, taking the initiative". In Go, every move forcing the opponent is called on the offensive. Sometimes, in order to fight for the offensive move, the two sides often pay a considerable price against each other. For example, in "Thirteen Chess Classics", there is a saying like "would rather lose a lot of chess pieces than an offensive position". As a chess term, the meaning of "would rather lose a lot of chess pieces than an offensive position" includes two aspects: one refers to the order of playing chess, whoever moves first is at the offensive position; the other refers to the situation of the chess game, who takes the initiative will be at the offensive position.

During the process of playing chess, many common moves are relatively fixed. Being given a special name and because of its typical efficacy, it is often used as a saying to describe a special situation or strategy in life. "Belated action" originally meant that in the battle of two sides, horses of one side are in the same line with the other side's horses, and there is a step between the two sides. At this time, if the cannon is put behind the general on the horse, it will be called a "belated action". This kind of move is a powerful kill action in the end-game or middle game stage, which later is used to metaphorize the lost and invalid actions, or to express opinions and take measures afterwards, which is meaningless. The reverse extension of its meaning is probably because people literally understand "belated action". "Belated" means late and untimely. When it maps from the concept domain of chess to the concept domain of behavior, it has the semantic meaning of

slowness and missing the best time which results in insignificance. "Lying-trough horse" refers to the horse advancing to the position one move previous of the basal elephant. It can not only checkmate, but also take the chariot, making the general (commander in chief) feel unsteady in the chair, which is a common fierce move. It is used as a metaphor to occupy an important position that threatens the other's life and death. It is also often used to describe people who keep a low profile and wait for opportunities. "Horse riding on a chariot" means that the chariot on the chessboard is in a position to be eaten by the opponent's horse, which refers to a critical condition. "The cannon right overhead" is a move in the chess game. Specifically, it is to put the cannon on the median line to attack the opponent's pawn (soldier), threatening his general (commander in chief). It later metaphorized a direct threat or strike. "Checkmate" refers to the general (commander in chief) being attacked by the opponent's chess pieces, which must be resolved and adjusted, otherwise he can only throw in the towel. It later refers to launch an attack to people, putting the other party in an embarrassing situation, also known as "check".

V. CONCLUSION

Contemporary metaphor theory relies on the analysis of regularized everyday language examples to prove the existence of a standardized conceptual metaphor system by concluding polysemy with a number of related meanings in a word, using the inference model of one concept domain which is used to generalize the situation of another concept domain as well as concluding novel metaphorical language. Lakoff and Johnson put forward, "In English, understanding love as a journey is the basis of many daily expressions. People not only use the concept of journey to talk about love, but also use it to think about love". [3] From the perspective of the study of word meaning, metaphorical thinking is a tremendous driving force for the extension of word meaning. The concept of insinuation explains the mechanism and process of word meaning from exclusive to generalization. "Although this kind of research doesn't go beyond the paradigm of traditional lexical research, it effectively explains how people establish connectivity between different cognitive domains based on experience and through cognitive methods such as metaphors, and then constitute a polysemous category system with family similarity as the paradigm. "[4] A large number of terms related to playing chess have evolved into the general vocabulary of modern Chinese. The idioms derived from playing chess have developed some general reference and metaphorical meaning, forming a rich metaphorical system. This metaphorical system doesn't appear out of nowhere, but is based on a cognitive view based on the two core sayings of "life is like chess" and "affairs of human life are like chess".

Zhang Min pointed out when refining the "conceptual" feature of the cognitive view of metaphor: "Metaphor is not only a question of language, it is also a way of thinking. In other words, the thinking process itself is metaphorical, and the conceptual systems on which we think and act are mostly constructed and defined in a metaphorical way." [5] The saying, "Life is like chess", means that the long journey of life is like a chess game. Every growth, every encounter, every trek, every success or failure is an opportunity, a key, a turning point, which affects a person's life's direction. The saying, "Affairs of human life are like chess", means that the social sentiments and the world's thousands of phenomena are like chess games, which are complicated but related in secret and interact as both cause and effect. Faced with the unpredictable changes and affairs in life, people need to plan ahead, consolidate step by step, be flexible and follow the trend; people must not only be meticulous, considerate, but also able to extricate themselves to consider every possible angle. People may often be hesitant about making moves, and they must be able to make a new start and smile at life. Viewing oneself with chess and observing people and things with chess is a metaphor of wonderful wisdom in Chinese and a penetrating summary among the people.

The language of a nation is the expression of its culture. On the one hand, language faithfully records all aspects of cultural matters, on the other hand, it will also be influenced by cultural elements and cultural patterns, resulting in new language phenomena. This language change and development essentially reflects a nation's unique way of thinking and cultural psychology. At the same time, the language of a nation is constantly constructing a nation's cognitive view. When discussing the meaning of language, Ma Qinghua pointed out: "Humans look at the external world through the meaning structure of language" [6]. This "external world" is not exactly equal to the objective world. It is a world that is filtered by values and is inevitably constructed by values in the meaning of language. The development of ancient Chinese chess has provided a cultural background for the emergence and enrichment of chess vocabulary. The people's love and familiarity with chess makes them very natural in the expression of daily life to use chess to describe things and truth with chess, which can be said that the chess game tells the life.

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