

Similarities of Metaphorical Uses of Wind in English and Chinese

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Abstract. Metaphorical uses of wind in English and Chinese can be classified into two types: in the form of idiom and in the form of single word. Wind's attribute in the source domain is mapped onto the target domain to talk about the target concept. The most frequently used metaphor is related to the force of wind, including the driving force and destructive force.

Keywords: wind; metaphor; English; Chinese.

1. Introduction

Metaphor is traditionally viewed as a figure of speech and a mere matter of language. However, the latest research on cognitive linguistics has suggested that metaphors are not merely stylistic, but that they are cognitively important as well. In *Metaphors We Live by* by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue that metaphors are pervasive in everyday life, not just in language, but also in thought and action. According to conceptual metaphor theory, the conceptual metaphors we have in our language are rooted in our bodily experience, which is called the experiential basis of conceptual metaphors. The meaning and understanding of a metaphor are realized through the mapping of two domains—the source domain and the target domain; the source domain is typically more concrete than the other for the purpose of understanding human concepts. Weather, one of the important natural phenomena closely related to human's daily life, is often made use of to depict abstract situations man faced or explain human concepts metaphorically. Metaphorical uses of wind in English and Chinese can be classified into two types: in the form of idiom and in the form of single word. Similarities of metaphorical uses of wind both in English and Chinese will be discussed. After example sentences collected from the corpus are presented, analyses of the metaphorical expressions will be provided.

2. Similarities of Metaphorical uses of Wind in English and Chinese

In the following analysis, we are going to classify similarities of metaphorical uses of wind both in English and Chinese on the basis of wind's highlighted features, and see how they are extended into abstract concepts. Wind has three distinctive phases: beginning, ongoing, and ending; and it has physical force though it does not have material content and is shapeless. The following metaphorical uses of the wind are based on these attributes of the wind.

2.1 (W-a) Slight Information is Wind

- (1) They retreated again, when they got wind that troops were assembling.
- (2) 各疫区工商部门闻风而动,迅速启动和完善快速反应机制,健全市场监管情况报告制度
- (3) Trouble will ensue if wind of this scandal gets out.
- (4) 他们知道所设的圈套已经走风,不禁大惊。
- (5) 随同出访的中国官员们放风说,温家宝的下一站访问地柏林,是他此次欧洲之旅中更加重要的一站。

(Accompanying officials let it be known that Mr. Wen's subsequent stopover in Berlin was much the more important leg of his European trip.)

Human being received information mainly by seeing, smelling and hearing. When hearing a sound of something or smelling the scent of something, we receive some kind of information. We all have the experience that wind can help bring us the sound or scent far away which carries some kind of information with it. With the help of the wind, we hear the sound or smell the scent which is not clear

since it is far away and thus gain a hint or slight information. So, getting natural wind of something is gaining slight information something. Based on this experience, it is not difficult for us to understand the metaphorical uses of the wind in “they retreated again, when they got wind that troops were assembling”. The “wind” in this sentence obviously does not refer to the natural wind. It doesn’t literally mean that they hear the sound or scent of the troops. It uses a specific knowledge domain (a real-life situation---hearing or smelling a natural wind of something) to talk about the target domain (gain slight information). It is a situational metaphor whose source has been constructed metonymically since the wind stands for the sound. Chinese expression “闻风而动” in example (2) is very similar to the metaphorical uses of wind in example (1). Since wind has the attribute of moving easily, both Chinese and English have the metaphorical expression --“走风” and “wind of ... gets out” which mean “the leak of the information”. There are many other similar expressions like 望风, 望风而逃, 漏风, 吹风会.

2.2 (W-b) in the Wind/风声紧

(6) 由于管理不严打击不力, 不法分子总抱有一种侥幸心理, 整顿风声紧时就潜伏起来, 风声一过就又蠢蠢欲动。

(7) I believe some change is in the wind.

Before the weather changes, the win appears first prior to other weather conditions. The wind approaching before other conditions enables it to refer to those signals prior to real happenings. Based on this attribute of the wind, it is easy to understand that “风声紧” and “in the wind” in the above examples do not mean literally, but they are extended to the intended concept, i.e. something is happening or ready to happen.

2.3 (W-c) Gone with the Wind /随风而去

“风声紧” is similar to “in the wind”. Both these expressions are metaphorical uses, meaning that something is happening or ready to happen. “风声一过” is related to the third phases of the wind: ending and disappearing. The wind not only blows away by itself in the end, but also leaves nothing behind. In daily life, we are familiar with the situation that something is taken away or brought towards us by the wind. This real-life situation can be used as a source domain to talk about a target situation that something vanishes or something comes into being both in Chinese and English. The follow sentences are examples:

(8) Everything we worked for was gone with the wind.

(9) 就让这一切随风而去吧。

(10) What wind blows you here?

(11) 什么风把你吹来了?

The above sentences demonstrate two metaphors: appearing is wind comes and disappearing or fading is gone with wind. In English, there are other phrases like “throw caution/fear to the wind” (You must throw your fears to the winds. He threw caution to the wind and dived in after the child) which can be classified into this type of metaphor.

2.4 (W-d) Tendency / Situation is Wind

As talked above, wind comes when the weather is going to change. When wind is blowing--the second phase of the stage, most of the time, it blows in a certain direction for hours or even days. So, these two attributes of the wind indicate the tendency of the weather conditions. And the development of a certain situation also has its direction and tendency. Based on this similarity, there are metaphorical uses of wind both in English and Chinese. In example (8)-(10), the wind/风 in the source domain conveys the metaphorical meaning---tendency/ situation.

(12) The winds of change are blowing through the entire organization.

(13) 品价格涨幅较大时, 市政府都及时拿出调控资金, 组织大量货源抑制涨风, 有效地平抑了市场价格。

(14)与此同时,香港和东京股市也刮起严重跌风,分别下降七百四十九点和二百八十七点。

The above examples are similar uses, but they are situational metaphors. Wind has influence on our daily life. The direction of the wind will affect our action. For example, when we make a fire or fly a kite, we need consider the direction of the wind. In example (11), it doesn't literally mean that politicians will see the direction of the wind before they make up their minds. It means that you find out what the situation is before you do something or make a decision. It uses the real-life situation of seeing which way the wind's blowing as source domain to talk about the target domain---the situation/tendency. Example (12) and (13) are similar metaphorical uses of wind in Chinese, but they belong to situational metaphors.

(15) Most politicians are careful to see which way the wind's blowing before they make up their minds.

(16) 有一些人会看看风向再做决定。

(17) 他一看风势不对,拔腿就跑。

(W-e) INFLUENCE/ FORCE IS WIND

(18) To protect their own lives and those of their children, they will bend with the winds of war.

(19) 天真的流沙河以为这只是一场误会,跑到西安避风

When the wind is blowing, things in the area covered will be affected, since wind has physical force which can blow the things away or even destroy everything in its path. Apart from this kind of destructive force, wind also can serve as driving force. For example, it can drive the sailboat. "Wind" in example (18) does not refer to the natural wind. Wind's destructive attribute (the source domain) is mapped onto the influence of the war (the target domain). Example (19) is a similar metaphorical expression in Chinese, "避风" in the source domain is mapped onto the target domain, i.e. to avoid influence.

The driving force of the wind is closely related to the sailing, as it produces motive power for the sailboat. Therefore, wind plays an important role in sailing and should be made full use of. Sailors should pay attention to the wind direction which will affect their sailing activities. Both Chinese and English have the idioms of wind meaning taking advantages of the wind, like to sail with every (shift of) wind, 见风使舵,借风使船。It is not difficult to see that "见风使舵/顺风转舵/随风转舵" in example (20) does not mean to sail according to the wind literally, but to turn every change of circumstance to one's advantage. So, it is a metaphorical use of the wind: to turn every change of circumstance to one's advantage is to sail with every wind.

(20) 毛主席正在考虑建立北京人民公社的名单。一向善于见风使舵的张春桥,马上将“新上海公社”改名为“上海人民公社”。

2.5 (W-f) Atmosphere/Vogue is Wind

While the wind spreads through the whole area, everything is covered and being affected by the wind. Thus, this attribute is mapped onto a situation where people within an area or time tend to have the same common performance.

(21) 腐败风迅速的蔓延也没帮到什么,在过去几年里,差不多3百万,大都是很聪明并受过最好教育的津巴布韦人逃走他国。

(The rapid spread of corruption does not help either. Some 3m Zimbabweans, many of the brightest and best trained, have fled the country in the past few years.)

(22)有人惊呼:世风日下,人心不古,文化沉沦

(23)因为贫穷,所以旅游资源还没有被破坏,民风很淳朴,极具旅游开发价值。

(24)因此,学校的教学目的、教学内容、教学方法、校风等均对学生形成正确的学习动机有着重要的意义。

(25)学风如何,我以为是和政治状态及社会情形相关的,倘在山林中,该可以比城市好一点。

(26) Ironically, just as the winds of freedom are blowing throughout central and eastern Europe, most Americans and the nation's politicians maintain that the solution to the drug problem is more repression -- and the Bill of Rights be damned.

(27) The winds of new doctrine swept through the streets of Athens and London and left the old and conventional modes of religious thought bare.

In example (21), the pervading attribute of the wind is transferred to the corruption atmosphere pervading the government. Under the nurture of this pervading wind, everyone is influenced to bribe or graft. Such use conveys negative values.

Nevertheless, this prevailing wind is not always negative. Instead, this metaphoric wind can be neutral, as in example (25), wind in the source domain is extended to indicate the target domain (studying atmosphere). And in example (26) and (27), it is positively valued; it refers to the development of the society. There are many other similar metaphorical expressions in Chinese belong to this group, like 风俗,风气,风尚,风潮. But it should be noticed that they are semi-metaphorical expressions since the later part of these words explicitly indicate the target concepts. So, these words are not major concern in this thesis and not to be discussed in detail.

3. Summary

Based on the above discussion, the similarities of the metaphorical uses of wind in English and Chinese can be summarized as follow: First of all, both in English and Chinese, wind's attribute in the source doamin is mapped onto the target domain to talk about the target concept. The most frquently used metaphor is related to the force of wind, including the driving force and destructive force. Second, the metaphorical uses of the wind in English and Chinese can be classified into two types: in the form of idiom and in the form of single word. Third, wind's three distinctive phases: beginning, ongoing, and ending are used to indicate the target concepts. Fouth, most of the metaphorical uses of wind are situational metaphors; some are image-based metaphors. Fifth, except for the metaphor: SLIGHT INFORMATION IS WIND, the other similar metahporical uses of wind in English and Chinese can be seen as surface representations of the concept metaphor: CONDITIONS ARE WEATHER.

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