

Abstract

This is a study of the conceptual metaphors about women in the Chinese novel *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* and its English translation, using the framework of Lakoff et al.(1992) in the contemporary metaphor theory. “Conceptual metaphors are pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:3; Lakoff 1992:1). In our conceptual systems, conceptual patterns are hidden in lexical expressions, ordinary expressions, conversational usages and metaphorical expressions.

In this study, the researcher collected all the expressions about women in the Chinese novel *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* and its English translation. According to the contexts, those expressions about women were classified into five categories: Social Roles, Attitudes, Emotions, Physical Descriptions and Personality. The conceptual patterns underlying those expressions are shown, and the similarities and dissimilarities among the expressions referring to women in the Chinese data and the English translation are illustrated. Due to the logographic writing system of the Chinese characters, the iconic metaphors in the Chinese characters were also included in the analysis of the Chinese data.

The findings indicate that some conceptual metaphoric patterns are shared between Chinese and English languages. These patterns include WOMEN AS PRECIOUS ENTITIES, WOMEN AS ARISTOCRATS, WOMEN AS ANIMAL, WOMEN AS GAS/FIRE, WOMEN AS TASTY, etc. There is only one pattern which

is WOMEN AS BODY PARTS appeared in Chinese only.

By analyzing all the Chinese characters which are a combination of the Chinese radical 女 [nu] (woman) and radical 心 [xin] (heart) combined with other characters, social attitudes towards women are revealed. It was found among these characters that more negative than positive terms come into use in the Chinese data, which basically imply a negative attitude toward women in both traditional and contemporary Chinese usage.

The analysis indicated that some social roles about women in both Chinese and English are marked forms, and stereotypes were uncovered about women which are deeply ingrained in Chinese society.

The socio-cultural attitudes toward women were also reflected through the findings of the conceptual metaphor patterns about women in the novel. Both English and Chinese foreign language learners could benefit from this research by gaining a better understanding about conceptual metaphors, especially with regard to the role of women today and how it is expressed.