

ABSTRACT

This is a comparative study of the conceptual metaphors about women in the Chinese and English contemporary discourse of women's online magazine websites, utilizing the framework of Lakoff (1992) in the contemporary metaphor theory. "Conceptual metaphors are pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 3; Lakoff 1992:1). In our conceptual systems, conceptual patterns are hidden in the lexical expressions, ordinary expressions, conversational usages and metaphorical expressions.

The aims of the study are to identify the lexical expressions used to describe women and to investigate the underlying conceptual metaphors represented in the contemporary discourse about women. The data for this study is collected from five Chinese and five English women's online magazine websites with a total of seventy-four articles. The lexical terms related to women and their lives are categorized into five types, which are Social Roles, Attitudes, Emotions, Physical Descriptions and Personality. In each category, the conceptual metaphorical patterns are investigated including the written iconic metaphors in the Chinese characters. The image icon of Chinese characters plays a significant role in the interplay of metaphor and iconicity. Moreover, implications from the study for some cultural and social issues about the contemporary women are discussed.

The findings indicate that some conceptual metaphorical patterns are shared in Chinese and English (WOMEN AS ARISTOCRATS, WOMEN AS DOLL, WOMEN

AS ANIMALS), which show the similar social attitudes about the contemporary women in Chinese and English. Some conceptual metaphorical patterns are not shared, such as WOMEN AS PRECIOUS ENTITIES (碧玉 [bì yù] (jade), 千金 [qiān jīn] (thousand gold)), WIFE IS A MAIN ROOM (正室 [zhèng shì] (wife)), MISTRESS IS SECOND BREAST (二奶 [èr nǎi] (second breast)) in the Chinese data; WOMEN AS MACHINES (*starter, stripper*) in the English data. Moreover, some lexical expressions implying the derogatory meanings are still used to represent women in the contemporary discourses (*bitch, frump, whore, biddy*), even though the feminists have been fighting against sexist attitudes for a long time. In some ways, it shows that there is less influence on change in social attitudes, and the social roles and status of women than expected. By exploring conceptual metaphors, the study reveals the ideologies and stereotypes of the contemporary women.