

TU “Earth” in Five-Elements Theory: From the Perspective of Conceptual Metonymies and Metaphors

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Abstract

Metonymy and metaphor, two important concepts of cognitive linguistics, have been studied for a long time. They are the way people cognitive the world. However, how they work in Chinese language? How they work in Chinese Five Element Theory? Few people have done those studies. This paper is studying one of the Five-elements theory TU “Earth” from the perspective of conceptual metonymy and metaphor.

Key words: Conceptual metonymy; Conceptual metaphor; Five-elements theory; TU; Earth

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INTRODUCTION

A series of studies of the cognitive mechanisms behind the Five Elements SHUI “Water”, HUO “Fire”, MU “Wood”, JIN “Metal” and TU “Earth” have been done. This paper focuses on TU “Earth”. Data analyses show that the construction of the semantic network of earth in ancient China is dominated by conceptual metonymies “earth for its features”, “earth for products from earth”, “earth for land”, “earth for region” and ‘earth for measuring land’, and by conceptual metaphors “a(n) phenomenon/object with features of earth is earth”, “a(n) person/object/phenomenon within a region is earth”, “human being is earth”, “god of land is earth” and “replacement of

dynasties if replacement of the five elements”. The network of earth in modern Chinese is built by metonymies “earth for land” and “earth for region”, and by metaphors “a(n) person/object/phenomenon within a region is earth”, “being out of fashion is earth”, “culture is earth” and “world is earth”. Changes in cognitive networks of earth through history reflect the weakening of the influence of the Five-elements theory.

1. OBJECT OF STUDY

Five-elements theory is ancient China world outlook, and it is an important part of Chinese traditional philosophy.

In West Zhou Dynasty or Warring State, the book 《尚书·洪范》 has recorded this theory for the first time: “五行：一曰水，二曰火，三曰木，四曰金，五曰土，水曰润下，火曰炎上，木曰曲直，金曰从革，土爰稼穡。” In this sentence, five elements can be understood as five materials (Pang, 1999), or a kind of classification of basic quality of concrete things (Kuang, 1992; Feng, 1998), that is to say, water stands for the thing which can moisten things, fire stands for head flows up, wood stands for all the things which have the bending and straightening quality, gold stands for the things which can be easily change their shape while earth stands for all the agricultural activities.

Ancient China have concluded some relationships between five elements: Gold produces water, water produces wood, wood produces fire, fire produces earth, and earth produces gold, while gold restrains wood, wood restrains earth, earth restrains water, water restrains fire, and fire restrains gold. Five elements is a circular system, and it is the fountain of life and death of all kinds of things and phenomena in nature, human beings and society. Ancient China have stipulated the four season theory, agriculture, and life of King and government decree according to five-elements theory. They also believed that human’s physiology and pathology are related to five elements.

Five-elements theory is the result of ancient China pursuing knowledge hierarchy. It is materialistic, but also platonic (Feng, 1998, pp.637-638). It has influenced production and life of people and keeps influencing modern China through cultural heritage. In this paper, from the perspective of conceptual metonymy and metaphor, we have analyzed the embodiment of earth element in ancient and modern Chinese, reveal the cognitive mechanism hiding behind language phenomenon in ancient and modern Chinese, and investigate the inner contact and development of how ancient modern Chinese cognize the world. This study can help to verify and develop conceptual metonymy and metaphor of cognitive linguistics as well as foreign language education.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Cognitive linguists believe that conceptual metonymy and metaphor are basic cognitive mechanism of human beings (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Gadenfors, 1996; Radden & Kovecses, 1999; Croft, 2002; Croft & Cruse, 2004; Taylor, 2001; Barcelona, 2002; Evans & Green, 2006; Kovecses, 2010). Word's meaning uses prototype meaning as starting point; expand under the cognitive mechanism of conceptual metonymy and metaphor, and form metonymy and metaphor express in language. Therefore, to analyze metonymy and metaphor express in language can help to retrospect conceptual metonymy and metaphor in human's thought.

Conceptual metonymy means a kind of cognitive way happens in idealized cognitive model (ICM), that is to say to use target domain to understand an object which is in the same pattern (Radden & Kovecses, 1999). Conceptual metonymy can be realized in two ways: one is that metonymy happens between entire ICM and constituents of ICM (whole-part); the other is that metonymy happens between those constituents of ICM (part-part).

Data analyses of the earth show that whole-part metonymy belongs to Category-and-Property ICM and Constitution ICM (Radden & Kovecses, 1999, pp.30-31; Kovecses, 2010, pp.179-181). To make it specific, in category-and-Property ICM, there are 'category replaces definition feature' and 'definition feature replaces category'. As for part-part metonymy, it is mainly found in Action ICM (Radden & Kovecses, 1999, P.36; Kovecses, 2010, pp.181-184). Specifically, metonymy can happen in agent, tool, action, and way of action and result of action.

Conceptual metaphor means mapping between a source domain and a target domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The happening of mapping is influenced by human's body experience, social experience and cultural experience (Lakoff & Turner, 1989, pp.67-72). A source domain may correspond with several target domains, while a target domain can also correspond with several source domains.

Metonymy mapping is systemic, and structure of higher level mapping sometimes will be replaced by lower level mapping (Lakoff, 1993, pp.222-224).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The corpus of this study comes from two sources. One is the book 《汉语大词典》 for ancient China (Luo, 2001). The other comes from CCL for modern Chinese. This book mentioned above is a China's key scientific research project achievement. Compared with other Chinese reference books, it lays particular emphasis on historical development of Chinese words, which can provide a lot of example of ancient China. This dictionary divides ancient China and modern Chinese on the basis of 1912, earlier than conventional divided method which uses the May 4th Movement as dividing point. Meanwhile, it uses complex Chinese characters to present ancient China in order to avoid misunderstanding.

In CCL corpus, there are abundant modern Chinese corpora which have a lot of types, from daily life to politics and religion, and from spoken language to written language. It can reflect roundly using situation of modern Chinese, which sets a good foundation for studying the earth element.

According to statistics, there are 677 TU entries of ancient China in 《汉语大词典》 while 19,556 TU entries of modern China in CCL corpus. This study is a qualitative analysis meanwhile does some quantitative counting on TU's conceptual metonymy and metaphor.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

According to data analyses, the prototype of TU, no matter in ancient times or modern times, is mixture of graininess sand and mud on the ground. From this prototype, under the series of conceptual metonymies and metaphors, expose and expand into nature, human beings and society.

4.1 TU in Ancient China

According to corpus, earth in ancient China is dominated by conceptual metonymies "earth for its features", "earth for products from earth", "earth for land", "earth for region" and "earth for measuring land" and by conceptual metaphors "a(n) phenomenon/object with features of earth is earth", "a(n) person/object/phenomenon within a region is earth", "human being is earth", "god of land is earth" and "replacement of dynasties if replacement of the five elements".

4.1.1 Conceptual Metonymy of TU in Ancient China

Here is an example for 'earth for its features'.

(1) "鸾, 瑞鸟, 一曰鸡趣. 首翼赤曰丹凤, 青曰羽翔, 白曰化翼, 元曰阴翥, 黄曰土符." (周师旷《禽经》)

Here TU means the color 'yellow', while "土符" refers to those LUAN "鸾" whose head feathers are plain yellow.

TU can also stand for products from earth, such as:

(2) "土反其宅, 水归其壑." (《礼记 郊特牲》)

(3) "起土木于凌霄, 构丹绿于焚燎." (晋 葛洪《抱朴子 诘鲍》)

(4) "柔丽之身亟委土木, 刚清之才远为丘壤." (宋 颜延之《庭诰》)

(5) "乐也者, 郁于中泄于外者也, 择其善鸣者而假之鸣, 金石丝竹匏土革木八者, 物之善鸣者也." (唐 韩愈《送孟东野序》)

In (2), TU refers to dam, in (3), TUMU means construction engineering, in (4) TUMU refers to grave and coffin and in (5), TU means a kind of musical instrument.

Earth for land; earth for region

(6) "百谷草木丽乎土." (《易 离》)

(7) "王者以下至于庶人, 非暮春中夏之时, 不可以种五谷, 兴土利." (汉 袁康《越绝书 吴人内传》)

(8) "某土之守某官, 使使者进于天子." (唐 韩愈《感二鸟序》)

(9) "凡吴土地人民, 越既有之矣, 孤何以视于天下." (《国语 吴语》)

In (6) TU means the land, in (7) TULI refers to matters concerned with plough and sow, in (8) TU means a piece of land, and in (9) TUDI refers to territory. In those sentences, the materials consist of those images refer to those images.

Earth used as a verb

(10) "凡建邦国, 以土圭土其地而制其域." (《周礼 地官 大司徒》)

The first TU means land, and the second TU refers to an action: To measure the land. Here the target of the action refers to the action.

4.1.2 Conceptual Metaphor of TU in Ancient China

Features similar to earth is earth

(11) "土来金去芙蓉膏, 丝轻帛贱羽毛布." (张际亮《送云丽观察督粮粤东》)

Here TU refers to opium which has not been boiled. The raw opium is brown or black with a dry surface, so ancient China used TU to replace it.

Saturn is earth

(12) "伊土宿之播灵, 为镇星而耀质." (隋 李播《周天大象赋》)

Here TU means Saturn, for the fact that ancient China found that the Saturn was yellow.

Location or Chinese era

(13) "考土中于斯邑, 成建都而营筑." (晋 潘岳《西征赋》)

Here TUZHONG means the central area.

Rough or inelegant is earth

(14) "土纸不可以作文书, 皆令用藤角纸." (晋 范宁《文书教》)

Here TUZHI refers to a kind of paper in ancient times which has low quality.

There are so many other conceptual metonymies and metaphors of TU in ancient

Chinese, here is chart in order to illustrate them clearly.

In ancient China, TU can also refer to human.

(15) "脾, 土藏也." (唐 颜师古注《急救篇》卷三 "脾肾五脏脾齐乳")

In (15), TUZANG refers to human's spleen. In five-elements theory, TU is mother of all things, which can birth and raise everything.

TU can stand for people who are out of the swim.

(16) "抚臺见他土形土状的, 又有某王爷的信, 叫好好的照应他." (《二十年目睹之怪现状》第三回)

TU sometimes can stand for gnome.

(17) "天子祭天, 诸侯祭土." (《公羊传·僖公三十一年》)

TU can also refer to replacement of dynasties.

(18) "轩辕) 有土德之瑞, 古号皇帝." (《史记·五帝本纪》)

4.2 TU in Modern Chinese

Data shows that in conceptual metonymy, there is "earth for land", and "earth for an area of land". In conceptual metaphor, there is "a (n) person/object/phenomenon within a region is earth", "being out of fashion is earth", "culture is earth" and "world is earth".

4.2.1 Conceptual Metonymy of TU in Modern Chinese

In modern Chinese, TU can refer to land.

(19) 可话又说回来, 要是多了这九亩地, 他家土改时就划成上中农.

(20) 所以我们决计凿一眼灌园的井. 选定了地点, 就破土动工.

(21) 用我们制定的环境保护和资源再生行动, 塑造一方净土, 栽出一片荫凉.

TU can also refer to an area of land.

(22) 不可一世的日本人第一次在本土受到炸弹的教训, 从而使他们的狂热的头脑开始懂得了战争的恐惧.

(23) 在涉及国家领土和主权完整的问题上, 中国政府和人民是绝不会退让的.

In (22), BENTU means the major part of a country's territory. In (23), LINGTU refers to the region which is under the control of one country, including land, water and airspace.

4.2.2 Conceptual Metaphor of TU in Modern Chinese

First, TU can refer to the thing which has the feature of earth.

(24) 另外有个烟贩, 由贵阳乘车到达, 行李衣箱内藏了一万块钱法币, 七千块钱烟土印花.....

(25) 离太阳由近而远, 依次是水星, 金星, 地球, 火星, 木星, 土星, 天王星, 海王星和冥王星.

In (24) and (25), the use of TU is similar to ancient one. Just like using TU to refer to opium, former's color and shape is like TU while latter's rays of light are like TU. So it is a kind of development of use of TU.

Moreover, TU can also stand for thing, situation or human beings within an area.

(26) 一九二七年蒋介石叛变革命，山西“土皇帝”阎锡山也由暗害革命转入公开屠杀，太原处于一片白色恐怖之中。

(27) 授予法国文化最高勋位时，他“吴冠中”在致答辞中只说“自己出生于农村，是土生土长的中国人”。

(28) 医生说：“只能用个土方法退烧了，打上一个鸡蛋清，加一小撮灶心土……”

(29) 由于成本比较高，供应高档消费的宾馆还能接受，一般市民买不起，还得土洋结合。

In (26), TUHUANFDI refers to a person who has armed forces. In (27), it means to be born there and grows up there. In (28) it stands for those methods which are not official. In (29) it means to combine local's simple technology with foreign advanced technology. This kind of use of TU, on the basis of “an area”, has experienced a series development such as “TU” → “an area” → “thing, situation and human beings within an area”

Meanwhile, a lot of modern Chinese corpora have reflected a meaning which is persons who are out of swimming.

(30) 他从这土头土脑的乡下文人手中，接过一份土头土脑的手写稿……

(31) 但那时也有新潮一族，我的一位亲戚就是。认为这种灯太土，偏要为我买一种玻璃丝灯。

“土头土脑” means behavior of people, wearing is not fashionable. This word has appeared twice in (30). First one means the wearing of a country scholar. The second one means his manuscript.

CONCLUSION

TU in ancient China basically conform to the use of that in five elements. According to data, in ancient China, TU stands for a type of nature, part of human beings, person with a certain character, a certain god in Chinese religion and some historical period of time of ancient China. While in modern Chinese, TU's use is narrower. It refers to a part of nature, persons in an area, a kind of character

and a certain local culture. So five-elements theory is very important in both ancient and modern Chinese culture.

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