

## Cognitive Analysis of Human-Metaphor Denomination

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### Abstract

There exists a lexical phenomenon in the Chinese language that the words containing “human-related” morphemes are used to refer to “things” with the metaphorical meaning. This paper names this as human-metaphor denomination.

The paper analyses the emergence of the lexical phenomenon from two perspectives: one from the metaphorical perspective, is the forming of the result of mapping from source domain “human” to target domain “things”; the other from traditional cultural Cognitive psychology of the Chinese.

**Key words:** Human; Metaphor; Denomination; Cognitive

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### INTRODUCTION

There exists a lexical phenomenon in Chinese language that the words containing “human-related” morphemes are used to refer to “things” with the metaphorical meaning. This paper names this as human-metaphorical denomination. Such as 竹夫人 (zhu fu ren, Mrs. Bamboo). It is a kind of cooling devices, elastic, bamboo weaving, and gap. It can make the body cool when sleeping in hot weather. It is a metaphor for madam because of consideration. Such words, in ancient Chinese and modern

Chinese vocabulary have distribution, and show some vitality. From the perspective of cognitive science, this paper tries to analysis the phenomenon of the term.

## 1. PHENOMENON DESCRIPTION

### 1.1 “Human-Related” Morphemes

Relatives appellation morphemes, such as “母(mu, mother), 舅(jiu, uncle), 舅母(jiumu, aunt)” etc.. 蜜蜂(mimu, bee’s mother), means the black bird behind the bees. Mother have the instinct to protect the young, therefore this kind of black bird just likes the bee’s mother. 虎舅(hujiu, tiger’s uncle), is a kind of cat, Because the cat looks like the tiger, it seems that they have relatives relationship. 蜡兄(laxiong, wax brother), the loquat. There is a layer of wax on its peel, so called wax brother.

The status and ethical of human society. Such as “王(wang, king), 相(xiang, the prime minister), 仆(pu, the servant)” etc. 花相(huaxiang, the prime minister of the peony), herbaceous peony. In ancient times the peony is called “the king of flowers”, herbaceous peony just likes its prime minister. 虎仆(hupu, tiger’s servant) is a fox. It is considered that the fox is small and smart, just like the tiger’s servant.

Appellation of honour. Such as “甫(fu, a good name to man in ancient times), 君(jun, the gentleman)” etc.. 蕙甫(shafu, a good name to aquatic plants, a kind of lucky aquatic plants. Because its big leaf can be made into fan, for its useful was called “fu”). 先知君(xianzhi jun, respectful name to the prophet), the tortoise. Turtle due to long life, and our ancestors have the tradition of divination with tortoiseshell, so the traditional way of thinking endow them with spiritual.

Body parts morpheme. Such as foot, waist, head, brain etc. 山脚(shanjiao, mountain’s foot) means the bottom of the mountain. 山腰(shanyao, mountain’s waist), means the mountainside. The mountain is similar to the part of the human body parts.

Life items morpheme. Such as “money, hat, earrings, clothes” etc. 榆钱 (yuqian, the money shaped like the fruits of elm), the fruit of elm. 花冠 (huaguan, the flower’s hat) means corolla. 苍耳 (canger, Siberian cocklebur just like earrings), Siberian cocklebur fruit. 地衣 (diyi, the clothes of the ground), lichen. Due to the growth of close to the ground, like a land of clothes, so its name.

## 1.2 The Content of the Things

### 1.2.1 The Specific Content

Plants: 名友 (mingyou, the famous friend), means Chinese flowering crabapple. 子母竹 (zimu zhu, child and mother bamboo), a kind of bamboo.

Animals: 珠母 (zhumu, the pearl’s mother), pearl mussel. 斫父 (zhuo fu, father with axe) mantis.

The manufactured: 汤婆 (tang po, hot woman) means warmer, the flat circular pot made of copper and tin to warm feet. 秃友 (tuyou, bald friend), means the Chinese writing brush pen which is no hair. 母钱 (mu qian, money mother), means capital, to proliferation of capital.

Natural things: 日母 (rimu), the sun is called mother. 月亮帝儿 (yueliang dier), the moon is called emperor.

### 1.2.2 The Abstract Content

父母之邦 (fumu zhi bang) refers to the motherland. 母法 (mufa, Parent law), refers to the constitution. 祸母 (huomu, The evil’s mother), is the root of evil.

## 2. THE COGNITIVE ANALYSIS

### 2.1 The Generation Mechanism—Metaphor

The human-metaphor denomination, no matter which angle focusing on, its expressive scope is quite widespread. The natural and close combinations of the two aspects reflect more abundant intension of such words. Metaphor is a mechanism that contributes to the combination of the two angles, from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in their book *Metaphors We Live By* is put forward, “metaphor is ubiquitous, in our language, thoughts. In fact, our system is based on the concept of metaphor.” Metaphor is not only a rhetorical means, but also a cognitive means and ways of thinking, the process of metaphor is the “source domain” to “target domain” mapping (Shu, 2005). Embodied in such words is from “human” to “things” mapping. The significance lies in the source field experience is mapped to the target domain, so as to achieve to meet the purpose to recognize target domain features.

The following content try to analyze the morpheme 子 (zi) from the perspective of metaphor study.

子 (zi), its cognitive domain involves at least the following: (A) Genetic: Because of Parents’ marriage, the baby was born, and it has a natural kinship with their parents. (B) Physiology: Compared with adult, baby is much smaller and more delicate. (C) Status: Baby is tended and raised by parents, so in a sense, it has inferior

social status and has to be controlled by its parents. (D) Sociality: A member of the human society is born to parents, originally is the baby (Dong & Yan, 2006).

From genetic cognitive domain, the baby is a product of human beings; from the point of the evolution, humans evolved from animals, therefore there are many similarities in the body structure characteristics humans and the animals have. Like humans, animal reproduction, therefore, the category of “child” is the natural extension to the animals, the offspring of animal breeding also known as “child”. Fixed in the form of words there are “鱼子 (yuzi, fish’s baby)” roe, 鸡子 (jizi, the hen’s children)egg, etc. Called the animals reproduce offspring “zi” usage in modern Chinese is relatively rare, but the offspring of plants as “child” is fairly common. Because most plants reproduce through seeds, in modern Chinese, “Child” is an important means of seeds, such as “南瓜子 (nanguazi) pumpkin seed”, “西瓜子 (xiguazi) watermelon” and so on. Genetic cognitive domain can be extended even to inanimate things or abstract things, which means that one out of things produced by another thing. For example, “子弹 (zidan, bullet)” refers to a rifle, slide rifle or pistol emitted cylindrical shells. Also like “子金 (zijin)” or “子息 (zixi)” refers to the interest, in a sense, the interest is attached to the principal. From the physiological and cognitive domain, the baby is small, the skin delicate, this feature is extended to animals, plants and other things, has produced the “child” some important metaphor meaning. First of all, “子” can be used to describe the young animals or plants, such as “芥子 (jiezi, mustard seed)”, etc. As a food, the infant animals or plants tend to be more tender, so “子” not only refers to small, texture also implied that they are more tender. Such as “子鸡 (ziji)” refers to small and tender chick. “姜 (zijiang)” means small and tender ginger. Secondly, the meaning of “child” small extension on to inanimate things, said their size is small. Such as “子舍 (zishu)” refers to the little house, “子墙 (ziquang)” refers to the internal wall of small yard, “子城 (zicheng)” refers to the little city within the big one.

It is worth noting that the “zi” in modern Chinese referred to small and hard lumps or granular material, can add the suffix “儿(er,-r)”, such as “枪子儿 (qiangzier, the bullet)” and “石子儿 (shizier, the gravel)”, “算盘子儿 (suanpanzier, beads of an abacus)”, etc.. From the point of these nouns refer to things, they are often small in size, quality of a material is solid, and the fruit of plants there are similarities. So we can think they are genetic cognitive domain and physiological both cognitive domains are mapped to the specific things on the results.

From the point of view of cognitive domain status, baby depend on their parents to raise, so dependent on their parents, or status under their parents, thus “zi” have the relationship of this kind of attachment and controlled. Therefore, the child is extended to many things, by means of metaphor refers to link two things under control or the

status of the minor things, such as “子母钟 (zimuzhong, primary-secondary clock)”, “子母弹 (zimudan, cluster bomb)”, “子公司 (zigongsi, subsidiary)” and so on.

## 2.2 The Chinese Traditional Cognitive Psychology

Metaphor is based on the basic experience, human-metaphor denomination; Its metaphor is the Chinese for their perception of basic experience. ““Take nearly all the body, far from the things”; this is a basic principle of ancient people understanding and describing things” (Shu, 2005). Chinese people showed a strong starting point to the body of the spirit of “nature and humanity” in describing the world, considering the heaven and earth and human united. Human as the center of all things, starting from the experience the universe, “everything is ready for me” also embodies the Chinese cognitive order: the first to know itself, including the human body and the organs; later, when meet in more advanced stages, human already familiar became known, perception, and describes the basis of other things. Thus, by means of words related to “human” to express the concept of things, is formed the cognitive metaphor by the original domain is mapped to the target domain. Human cognitive style from near to far, from concrete to abstract, is the cognitive basis of human-metaphor denomination.

Such as “发菜 (facai, fungus just like hair), black moss”, “罗锅桥 (luoguoqiao, bridge hunchbacked” and so on, from “an characteristics of the human body or body modifier” for the original domain, respectively, to the “fungus, bridge” monogatori (center) mapping, so as to realize the process of metaphor, constitute a new word.

The han nationality attaches great importance to ethics. In human- metaphor denomination, there is quite a number of words act as “source domain” expressing Chinese status, filial piety and loyalty, etc.. It embodies the ethical and cognitive psychology of the han nationality. Such as “奴 (nu, slave)”, typically reflect the master slave consciousness. “飞奴 (feinu, the slave can fly)”, refers to the homing pigeons, can deliver letters. “狸奴 (linu, the slave of raccoon dog)”, means cat, can catch mice. “锡奴 (xinu, the slave made of tin)”, the bottle used to warm

feet in ancient times. These things have in common, that is, serving others. “Biological world is equal, a creature with another creature, there is no attachment and slavery relationship between ancient people with their own values to see them, tell the pecking” (Tan, 2003). Visible, these words reflects the hierarchical of the ancients. As another example is “孝 (xiao, filial piety)”. “孝竹 (xiaozhu, grandmotherly and filial bamboo)”, new bamboo and old bamboo grow very dense, and if, old and young together, so the name. “孝乌 (xiaowu, filial crow)”, when the crow chicks grow up, take food feed its parent. These words reflect the ethics of the Chinese.

## 3. EPILOGUE

From the point of view of cognitive metaphor, this article examines the human-metaphor denomination of the Chinese language. Through the above analysis, originally that there is no relation between two things are compared, because people have associations with them in the field of cognition. Cognitive function of metaphor is the bridge of human exploration of itself and the external world, known as metaphor for the unknown things, metaphorically with simple things complicated things, with specific metaphor abstract things. The human-metaphor denomination also the same: human as the measure of things, to complete the “human” from the source domain is mapped to the target domain “things” metaphor for the process.

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