

**On the Mode of the Semantic Changes of Body-part Terms in English and Chinese --
Illustrated by the Examples of the Lexical Items “Hand” and “Shou” in the Holy Bible.**

Wang Min & Wang Wenbin

(College of Foreign Languages, Shaoxing University, Shaoxing, Zhejiang, 312000; Institute of Theoretical Linguistics, Ningbo University, Ningbo, Zhejiang, 315211)

Abstract: By applying the prototype theory and Taylor's meaning chain mode, this paper proves that the path of the semantic changes of body-part terms in English and Chinese is the cactus mode, illustrated by the examples of the lexical items "hand" and "shou" in the corpus of the Holy Bible. A cactus mode refers to the metaphor that the path of the semantic changes is like the path of the development of pears of a cactus. However, due to the differences in cultural models between these two different nations, the transferred usages of “hand” and “shou” have different significations.

Key words: body-part terms; the prototype theory; semantic changes; the cactus mode

1. Introduction

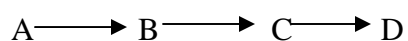
The critical role of the body in human meaning and understanding was noted a long time ago. Protagoras maintains that “Man is the measure of all things” (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:88). Vico (1968) suggested that human beings tend to their own body for the understanding of things around them. In reference to the importance of the human body, Yu (2001:31) states that there is actually "turn toward body" in contemporary scholarship in the human sciences. Cognitive linguistics has made a special contribution in this regard by bringing into the foreground the linguistic evidence for the connection between human body and meaning. Heine et.al (1991:2) argue that as the "imputing element" of grammaticalization, spatial words are not the most original ones; the

cognition about one's body is the basic anchor point. According to Shen (1994:19), all the concepts are derived from human body, and then spread to other domains including space, time and quality. Smith et al. (1981) state “according to an analysis of figurative language over three centuries, the human body is consistently the most frequent source of metaphors” (quoted from Sakuragi & Fuller 2003:382). Lu (2003:23) posits the cognitive law that man cognizes things from the near to the far, from entity to non-entity, from the simple to the complex, and from the concrete to the abstract. This way of cognition determines the basic role of body-parts in cognizing the world. The metaphorization of body-part terms is one of the basic means in forming and expressing concepts. That is the reason why body-part terms have multiple metaphorical extensions. However, how are the multiple extensions of the body-part term related? How does the semantic category of the body-part term expand? These questions are yet to be solved. On the basis of the above research, this thesis tries to analyze the linguistic phenomenon of the semantic changes of body-part terms from the cognitive angle. It focuses on exploring the path of the semantic changes of body-part terms.

2. The Path of Semantic Changes

Zhao (2001: 84) proposes, “Semantic category enlarges around the archetype, forming a radical frame. This is determined by cognitive models of human mind, and is consistent with model of semantic changes of a word, e.g., the radiation type and the concatenation type”. Wang (2001:250) holds that there are three types of semantic changes. They are the radiation type, the concatenation type and the intertexture type. The radiation type refers to the fact that all derivative meanings are radiating from one center, the primary meaning. In the concatenation type one derivative meaning derives from the primary meaning and then from this derivative meaning, another meaning develops. The path is like a chain. Distribution of the members in a polysemic category is in

certain patterns with some inner principle. There are two ways of distribution: radical (Lakoff 1987) and chaining (Taylor 2001). Lakoff (1987:287) holds that in radical category one subcategory is the center; the other subcategories are linked to the center by various types of links. According to Taylor (2001:108), a polysemous category consists of several relatively discrete senses. The different senses cannot be unified on the basis of a common semantic denominator. Rather, the different meanings are related through “meaning chain”. The process may be illustrated as follows:



Wang (2007:264) brings forward a new mode for the path of the semantic changes, a cactus mode. A cactus mode refers to the metaphor that the path in which the primary meaning develops to the derivative meanings is like the path of the development of pears of a cactus. One pear is connected with another. The whole cactus develops towards multiple directions, among which some pears develop through radiation type while others develop through concatenation path.

This thesis argues that the cactus mode for the path of semantic changes is also applicable to the semantic changes of body-part terms. The basic meaning is the primary pear. Other pears of the cactus are derivative meanings. There are two types of connection among all the pears: radiation type and concatenation type. The lines under the lowest pear refer to the root of the cactus, which can be regarded as the conceptual system of human being. According to Saeed (2000:301), cognitive linguists claim that meaning is based on conventionalized conceptual structures. The root of the cactus is deeply grounded into the soil. The soil provides all kinds of nutrients for the development of the whole cactus. Metaphorically, the development of the multiple meanings of one word is the result of the joint influence of cultural model and bodily experience. Lakoff & Johnson (1980:57) maintain that there are two sources of how our conceptual system is grounded,

firstly “direct physical experience”, and secondly “cultural presuppositions”.

3. The Semantic Changes of “hand” and “shou” in the Holy Bible

This paper chooses the Holy Bible on line as the corpus for study, www.o-bible.com. Three versions are available: Basic English Version (bbe), the King James Version (kjv) and the Chinese Union Version (hgb). Hereafter we use the short forms for these versions. By using the search tool of the electronic bible <http://www.o-bible.com>, this paper makes a statistic of the occurrence frequency of the common body-part terms. “hand” in kjv version ranks number one in the occurrence frequency. Therefore the two versions of kjv and hgb are chosen, which can serve the purpose for this contrastive study of English and Chinese. This paper analyzes the meanings of “hand” and “shou” in kjv and hgb versions. The following sentences are chosen to illustrate the semantic changes of these meanings.

The following derivative meanings of “hand”, “ownership” (1-a), “control” (2-a) and “management” (3-a), are connected to one another, which are referred to as group one.

- (1) a. [kjv] And he said, for these seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of the hand, that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well. (From Gen 21: 30)
- b. [hgb] 他说,你要从我手里受这七只母羊羔,作我挖这口井的证据。
- (2) a. [kjv] And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.(From Gen 9:2)
- b. [hgb] 凡地上的走兽和空中的飞鸟,都必惊恐,惧怕你们。连地上一切的昆虫并海里一切鱼,都交付你们的手。
- (3) a. [kjv] He made him oversee over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.
(From Gen 39:4)

b. [hgb] 主人派他管理家务，把一切都交在他手里。

All the three meanings of “hand” are derived from one action the hand can do, to hold. When you hold something in your hand, you can control it. If something refers to the belongings, you own it. If you can control the activity, you can handle it. Therefore, “ownership” and “management” come from the meaning “control” while the meaning “control” comes from the primary meaning. In the corresponding sentences of hgb version, “shou” has the same derivative meanings.

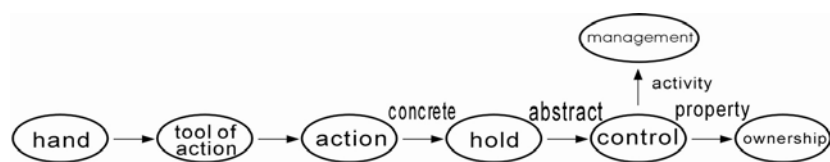


Figure 1-a the semantic changes of "hand" in group one in kjv version



Figure 1-b the semantic changes of "shou" in group one in hgb version

Reviewing other derivative meanings, the close connection can be found between “responsibility of action” (4-a), “authority” (5-a), “handling” (6-a), “attack” (7-a), “work” (8-a). All these meanings form group two.

(4) a. [kjv] And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.(From Gen 9:5)

b. [hgb] 流你们血，害你们命的，无论是兽，是人，我必讨他的罪，就是向各人的弟兄也是如此。

(5) a. [kjv] And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. (From Gen16: 9)

- b. [hgb] 耶和华的使者对她说，你回到你主母那里，服在她手下。
- (6) a. [kjv] And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. (From Gen 39:3)
- b. [hgb] 他主人见耶和华与他同在，又见耶和华使他手里所办的尽都顺利。
- (7) a. [kjv] And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him. (From Gen 22:12)
- b. [hgb] 天使说，你不可在这童子身上下手。一点不可害他。
- (8) a. [kjv] And he called his name Noah, saying, this same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed. (From Gen 5:29)
- b. [hgb] 给他起名叫挪，说，这个儿子必为我们的操作和手中的劳苦安慰我们。这操作劳苦是因为耶和华咒诅地。

In hgb version, “shou” appears in all the corresponding sentences except in 4-b, which shows that “shou” has no derivative meaning of “zeren” (responsibility).

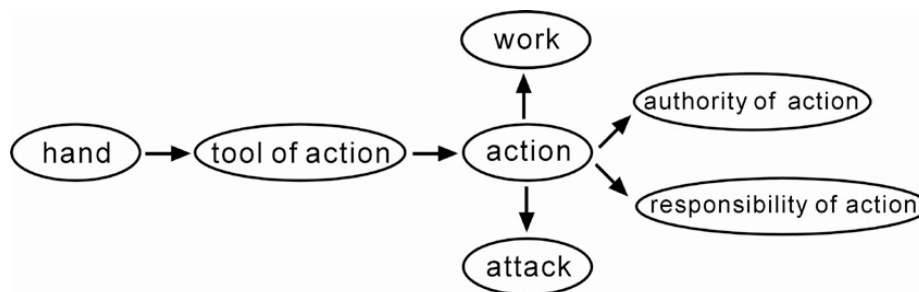


Figure 2 the semantic changes of "hand" in group two

The lexical meanings of “hand”: “at two sides nearby body” (9-a) and “near” (10-a) are closely related to each other. These meanings compose group three. However, “shou” does not appear in 9-b and 10-b.

- (9) a. [kjv] Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will

go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. (From Gen 13:

9)

b. [hgb] 请你离开我，你向左，我就向右。你向右，我就向左。

(10) a. [kjv] Esau said in his heart, the days of mourning for the father are at hand; then will I slay the brother Jacob.(From Gen 27: 41)

b. [hgb] 以扫心里说，为我父亲居丧的日子近了，到那时候，我要杀我的兄弟雅各。

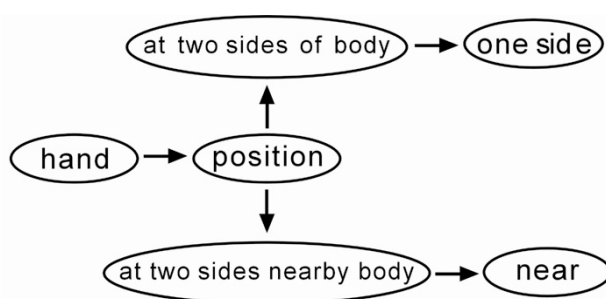


Figure 3 the semantic changes of "hand" in group 3

The above three figures, which demonstrate the path of the semantic changes of the three groups of derivative meanings of “hand”, can be combined to form Figure 4-a and Figure 4-b which illustrate the paths of the semantic changes of “hand” and “shou”.

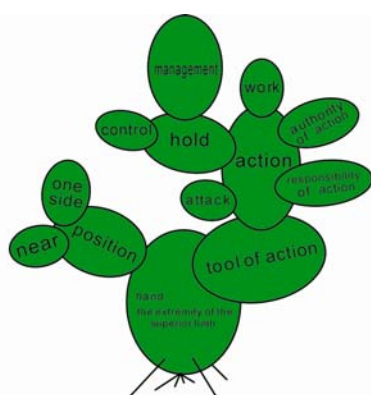


Figure 4-a the cactus mode of the semantic changes of "hand" in kjv version



Figure 4-b the cactus mode of the semantic changes of "shou" in hgb version

Analyzing Figure 4-a in detail, the derivative meanings of “hand” can be divided into three groups.

Group one is clustered around the concrete action of “hand”, namely, “hold”. Group two is

clustered around the action of “hand”. Group three is clustered around the position of “hand”. Traditionally this is referred to as radiation type. In the cactus metaphor, the three groups of the derivative meanings are the three groups of pears. Every group of pears has the centered pear. The primary meaning of “hand”, denoting the extremity of the superior limb, is regarded as the primary pear. All the pears of the cactus are developed from the primary pear.

Comparing Figure 4-a with Figure 4-b, it can be concluded that the cactus mode is applicable not only to the semantic changes of English body-part terms, but also applicable to the semantic changes of Chinese body-part terms. However, the specific cactuses for the semantic changes of “hand” and “shou” take on a different look. The cactus in Figure 4-a has three groups of pears, while the cactus in Figure 4-b has only two groups of pears. “shou” does not have the derivative meanings of group three as “hand” does. In one group of pears related to the action of “shou”, the corresponding pear of “zeren” is missing.

Taylor’s meaning chain theory can be applied to explain the particulars concerning the cactuses of English body-part terms and Chinese body-part terms. In principle, any node in a meaning chain can be the source of meaning extension. However, because of cultural differences, the cognitive mechanism of different people has particulars. Therefore, different people choose different node. From the same node, different meanings develop. As a result the cactus mode for the corresponding body-part terms in Chinese and English may take a different look, exiting immense structural complexity. As in figure 4-b, the node of position of “shou” is not chosen in Chinese. Also in figure 4-b, from the node of action of “shou”, the meaning “responsibility” does not develop.

4 Conclusion

This paper explores the path of the semantic changes of body-part terms, by analyzing the

examples of the lexical items “hand” and “shou” in the Holy Bible. It proves the hypotheses that the path of the semantic changes of body-part terms in English and Chinese is the cactus mode, illustrated by the figures of semantic changes of “hand” and “shou”. This is attributed to the universal human cognitive mentality and bodily experience. Shen (1998:45) holds that “human beings share the similar cognitive mentality. Cognitive mentality is universal from ancient time to current days, from home to abroad.” Ungerer & Schmid (2001:279) argue that our bodily experience acts as a source model for the numerous metaphors which are used to conceptualize less familiar concrete phenomena. However, the specific cactuses for the semantic changes of the corresponding English and Chinese body-part terms have a slightly different appearance, due to cultural differences. The development of the multiple meanings of one word is the result of the joint influence of cultural model and bodily experience. The roots of the cactus are deeply grounded in the soil, which stands for the joint influence of cultural model and bodily experience.

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