

Metaphor, polysemy, and cultural models

Chiarung Lu
National Taiwan University

Although Kövecses (2007) has tackled the interrelation between metaphor and cultural models, the role of polysemy between the two remains unclear. This study aims to address the interrelation between metaphor, polysemy, and cultural models. Metaphor (including metonymy), as a means causing semantic change, provides a base for the emergence of polysemy. On the other hand, cultural models can be detected by clusters of related thoughts or metaphorical expressions, known as conceptual metaphor. Since a specific cultural model has a top-down influence on people's behaviors, it results in more linguistic manifestations than other verbs can have, leading to a positive correlation between a specific cultural model and the amount of related linguistic expressions. In other words, the cultural model is revealed by metaphors; at the same time, it triggers more related metaphors in describing the specific event in question, causing it (i.e., a specific verb) become polysemous. Our findings support the above statement after examining eating metaphor and the food frame in Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese, against the background of cultural model theory by Claude Lévi-Strauss. According to him, the raw and the cooked represent different degrees of cultivation. In Chinese culture, eating and food are very important. The lexical item *shou* 'cooked' means 'ripen', 'sophisticated', 'well-trained', 'mature', 'treated', 'skilled', 'familiar', 'carefully', and '(sleeping) deeply'. On the contrary, *sheng* 'raw' means 'green', 'unskilled', 'untreated', and 'unfamiliar'. Under this cultural model, the emphasis on eating can be seen from many related Chinese and Taiwanese proverbs, resulting in the polysemies of *chi/shi* 'eat' and *tsiáh* 'eat'. For example, the polysemy of *tsiáh* can be understood by the following conceptual metaphors found in Taiwanese proverbs: MAKING A LIVING IS EATING, RELYING ON OTHERS IS EATING, CONSUMING IS EATING, LIVING IS EATING (AGE AS FOOD), TAKING ADVANTAGES IS EATING, INVASION IS EATING, CAUSAL CHAIN IS EATING AND EXCRETING, and CURING IS EATING (FOOD AS MEDICINE). To sum up, the complexity of the meaning of *shou* 'cooked', *sheng* 'raw', and *chi/shi/tsiáh* 'eat' in Chinese and Taiwanese reflects a specific Chinese cultural model traditionally placing great emphasis on the eating event, as a Chinese proverb goes, People take eating as their sky/heaven. This study is an interdisciplinary and empirical study, combining the linguistic and anthropological view, supported by solid corpus-based evidence.

Key words: metaphor; polysemy; cultural study; eating frame; proverb

Data: [Taiwanese proverbs]

(1) MAKING A LIVING IS EATING

看 天，食 飯

Khuànn thinn tsiáh pñg

look.at sky eat rice

'One has his/her meals depending on weather above.'

(2) RELYING ON OTHERS IS EATING

五十 歲食 爸，五十 年食 子

gōotsáp hè tsiáh pa, gōotsáp nî tsiáh kiánn

fifty age eat father fifty year eat son

'Relying on [one's] father for fifty years, [and] relying on [one's] children for [another] fifty years.'

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