

A Brief Analysis of the Metaphorical Meaning of "eat +NP"

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Abstract

In modern Chinese, the verb-object structure composed of "eat +NP" is widely used in modern Chinese vocabulary, and has become an indispensable daily language. The archetypal sense of the verb "to eat" is to put food, etc. into the mouth and then swallow it. As a kind of behavior representing spatial structure, "eating" generates a series of metaphorical meanings through the metaphorical projection to the abstract cognitive domain similar to the structure. The systematization and coherence of conceptual metaphor are of great significance to the study of the semantic structure type of "eat +NP". Based on the conceptual metaphor theory, this paper analyzes the action metaphor meaning of the verb "eat" in Chinese, which can help people better understand the unconventional collocation of "eat".

Keywords

"eat +NP" Structure; Conceptual Metaphor Theory; Metaphor of Action.

1. Conceptual Metaphor Theory

In the use of language, metaphor is a common rhetorical device to express people's thoughts and emotions. It is closely related to the language communication of People's Daily life, and often appears in speech expression and written language. Metaphorical expression is closely related to the development of human thinking. The author believes that metaphor reflects the operation of human thinking mode, and this rhetorical device is also very common in the use of language. Conceptual metaphor theory is an important theory put forward by Lakoff and Johnson in the book *Metaphors We Live By*. In their view, metaphor is a systematic mapping process from a concrete conceptual domain to an abstract conceptual domain, and the mapping follows the principle of constancy. The innovative viewpoint of conceptual metaphor theory has promoted the development of cognitive semantics to some extent.

Conceptual metaphor can be divided into three categories: structural metaphor, directional metaphor and ontological metaphor. Structural metaphor refers to using one concept to construct another related concept, such as "the beautiful woman's love for me is beyond my reach". The "love" in the example has the meaning connotation of structural metaphor, and the concept of "love" can be constructed into the concept of "mountain", which is lofty and imposing, and the corresponding love is also selfless and great. Thus "love" has the characteristic of structural metaphor; Location metaphor refers to the concept of a complete system to build another concept, such as "happy first" and "customer first" corresponding location metaphor is "full of emotions" and "customer first"; Ontological metaphor refers to the understanding of experience based on objects and substances. People often project abstract thoughts, concepts, states, emotions and other intangible concepts into concrete substances or entities. For example, "morning", "noon", "evening" and other words, they do not have a very clear time boundary, the meaning of these words themselves is vague. In addition, for terms such as "mountain top" and "mountainside", the altitude of "mountain top" and "mountainside" is not clearly defined in reality. These terms are ontological metaphors, expressing a vague and discrete meaning.

According to the conceptual metaphor theory, metaphor is ubiquitous in People's Daily verbal communication. Everyone is born with the basic thinking ability of metaphor. All kinds of thoughts and behaviors in our daily life and the basic conceptual systems we use are ultimately dependent on metaphors. Conceptual metaphor is systematic and coherent. Conceptual metaphors can form a coherent conceptual system among different metaphors through their metaphorical meanings, and their expressions are coherent. Conceptual metaphor is also obviously systematic. When people use conceptual metaphor, they tend to highlight some conceptual elements and then hide some conceptual elements accordingly. For example, "A book you love is your good friend", on the one hand, this sentence highlights "the benefits and importance of a favorite book for one's growth", on the other hand, it also covers up the possibility that some books may also be harmful to one's physical and mental health.

The systematization and coherence of conceptual metaphor have great implications for the study of semantic structure types of "eat +NP", and the characteristics of systematization and coherence are also applicable to the conceptual metaphor of "eat +NP" in the verb-object structure. There are many different conceptual metaphors for the verb "to eat".

2. The Metaphorical Meaning of the Verb "eat" in Chinese

From ancient times to the present, in the food culture of different countries. The verb "to eat" has a common original meaning: to put food into the mouth and swallow it through chewing (including sucking and drinking). With the progress of verbal communication, the verb "to eat" has been gradually transformed from the simple and straightforward original meaning to the abstract cognitive meaning through conceptual metaphor, which has produced a series of regular metaphorical meanings. Based on the conceptual metaphor theory mentioned above, the author summarizes the conceptual metaphor meaning of the verb "to eat" into the following six meanings.

2.1. The Verb "to eat" is a Metaphor for "to Comprehend"

When the verb "to eat" means that food will be absorbed by the human body after entering the body, this original meaning is extended by social activities, which gives the verb "to eat" the relevant meaning "to comprehend". That is, food is digested and absorbed by the body. The verb "to eat" can mean to savor the taste of food, and thus derive the meaning of "understanding and understanding" of food or concepts, which can be extended to estimate, consider and grasp things.

2.2. The Verb "eat" is a Metaphor for "Consume"

Human beings need a certain physical strength to digest food, and mapping this experience to the field of social life generates the metaphorical meaning of the verb "to eat", which means "to consume". In other words, the action of "eating" requires physical exertion, and the process of food being absorbed and consumed is essentially the process of food changing from existence to absence. Based on this phenomenon, the metaphorical meaning of "consuming" can be derived from the verb "eating". In the field of social life, the verb "to eat" can indicate the consumption of material conditions, as well as the consumption of mental or time and energy.

2.3. The Verb "to eat" is a Metaphor for "to Rely on"

The process of eating is the basis of human survival and movement. Since the original meaning of the verb "to eat" is "to eat", the concept is extended to "to rely on", which has a similar meaning to "to eat". That is to say, the combination of the action "to eat" and its matching event produces "to rely on...". Relying on a substance... To live or survive ". Human beings are not only the product of nature, but also keep pace with the development of society and have significant sociality. Therefore, the noun NP in the "eat +NP" structure can be any other element in society.

Besides food for physiological energy, humans can also rely on other ways to obtain or exchange energy for material and spiritual life. From the words collected from the corpus, it can be found that this kind of noun or noun phrase which is often paired with the verb "eat" is often the source of money and resources related to "eat", and the way and means of human survival.

2.4. The Verb "to eat" is a Metaphor for "to Suffer"

It is difficult to understand the metaphorical meaning of "bear and suffer" only from the natural behavior of "eating". Everything on earth is affected by gravity. Food and people are not only affected by gravity, but also have a powerful attraction and interaction relationship. This mutual attraction of natural forces can be mapped to social life so that people feel the effects of other forces and other social events. In this case, the metaphorical meaning of the verb "to eat" is the result of the action of "to eat" and the action of "to eat" itself. When food enters the body, when do people "eat"? In what way do you "eat"? What does the eater feel? This series of processes makes people think about what they have suffered and what they can withstand.

2.5. The Verb "to eat" is a Metaphor for "to Destroy, Enter, Blend in, Swallow"

When humans represent the action "eating", the most intuitive spatial structure is represented by the relevant actions such as "entering and eating". Therefore, the natural spatial meaning of "food from the outside reaches the inside of the human body through eating" is reflected to other relevant things in the society, thus extending the metaphorical meaning of "something destroys, enters, integrates or annexes other things", as shown above: "Ship draught" is a metaphor for "ship immersed in water and constantly absorbing water under heavy load". In addition, "enter" can also be extended to "one thing is swallowed and destroyed by another", thus deriving the metaphorical meaning of "engulf" and "annihilate".

2.6. The Verb "to eat" is a Metaphor for "to Gain or Win"

The verb "to eat" originally means that food or energy enters the body and is absorbed by the body, and the body receives the energy transmitted by the food. Mapping this relational metaphor to the social level, the verb "to eat" metaphorically means "to acquire and win".

3. Conclusion

With the progress of verbal communication, the verb "to eat" has been transformed from a simple and straightforward original meaning to an abstract cognitive meaning through conceptual metaphor, which has produced a series of regular metaphorical meanings, which also reflects the economic principles of language. Starting from the conceptual metaphor theory, the author analyzes and summarizes six metaphorical meanings of action implied by the verb "eat" in Chinese, which can help people better understand the unconventional collocation of "eat".

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