Languages across Cultures

June 2008 volume 1

Publisher
Foreign Languages and Literature Department
National Cheng Kung University

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ISBN
978-986-01-4462-8 (平裝)

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## INDEX
Cognitive Models of Using Animal and Plant Metaphors

Shelley Ching-Yu Hsieh
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Abstract
This article compares animal and plant metaphors to show the semantic autonomy of language and the cognitive level of using these metaphors in light of lay views vs. scientific theories (Kövecses, 2000) and verbal processes (Halliday, 1985). We found that (1) metaphors are not scientific; (2) but the essence of metaphors and nature seems to overlap: in the natural world, animals are moving creatures while plants are motionless life forms; (3) in our languages, animal metaphors are active expressions whereas plant metaphors are static. Language makes good use of natural species via mappings from bodily experiences. Based on this research, we review cognitive scientists’ approaches at the end.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics, verbal process, animal metaphors, plant metaphors

1. Introduction

Lakoff (1987, p.221) argues that metaphors become conventionalized through repeated use. They become central to cognition through framing the abstract in terms of the concrete. In Lakoff’s view, metaphor exists at a deeper generating level than other linguistic expressions. Can this level be located more precisely? On the other hand, Kövecses (2000, p.27) contends that metaphors which express emotion are stable through time. Kövecses, however, does not provide a rationale to explain why these metaphors are resistant to diachronic change. This paper aims to investigate the cognitive level of animal and plant metaphors in human minds, and the reasons for stability of these metaphors. We will answer these two research
questions by reviewing the approaches of Lakoff (1987, p.221) and Kövecses (2000, p.27) based on the present research.

Two historically unrelated languages, Mandarin Chinese and German, were selected to demonstrate that the psychobiological basis and the conceptions of these metaphors work in languages by processes of analogy.

There are noteworthy treatises that delve into plant concepts in human cognition. Lévi-Strauss (1963, p.2) noticed that animal and plant names are consistently used as cultural symbols. In Lakoff and Turner’s (1989) ‘Great Chain of Being’ metaphor, human beings are ranked at the highest order, followed by other animals, and finally, plants. Animal and plant metaphors play important role in languages. Li (1959) recounts historical events and folklore that mold the Chinese concept of flowers. Atran (1990, p.219) shows that plant names are convenient choices for describing human society. Chen and Gu (1999) explore children’s cognition of prototypical plants from an experimental approach.

Linguists have also examined the cognitive foundation of animal metaphors in language. Nesi (1995), for instance, discusses conventional animal metaphors in different cultures and highlights the problems that second language users may have when using English animal metaphors. Ahrens and Say (1999) examine animal metaphors in English and Chinese, and propose that animals’ appearance and behavior are usually anthropomorphized. Hsieh (2003) examines animal expressions in Mandarin Chinese and German and suggests that animal expressions tend to reflect cultural values.

Much research has focused on the negative connotations of animal expressions. For example, Fraser (1981) has investigated insulting terms that encode animal names. Low (1988) and Newmark (1988) show that animal metaphors are largely used to describe inferior or undesirable human habits and attributes. Fontecha and Jiménez Catalán (2003) look into cow and fox expressions in English and Spanish dictionaries. They found that the main metaphorical meanings of the female terms have more negative connotations than those of the male terms.

Little research, however, has been conducted about the intrinsic property and the cognitive level of the negative usage of animal metaphors as well as the use of
The organization of this article is as follows. First, I examine how animal and plant metaphors are generated; from laypersons’ views rather than being based on scientific knowledge. Second, the characteristics of animal and plant metaphors are discussed to show how lay views overlap with nature. Finally, the paper answers the research questions and reviews cognitive scientists’ assumptions.

2. Research framework

Significantly related theories about human cognition should first be mentioned. Kövecses (2000, p.18) proposed that lay views can influence and determine scientific theories, and vice versa. This assumption can be illustrated and further developed in terms of animal and plant metaphors, as will be shown below.

Further, human conceptualization is fundamentally structured by metaphors consisting of mappings from our bodily experiences (Lakoff, 1987; Johnson, 1987; Gibbs, 1994; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999), such as visual perception, smelling, or feeling. In other words, the overall image and the metaphorical reasoning is shaped by the human body. For example, Yu (2004, p.680) pointed out that the English idiom *with one’s eyes shut* means ‘without full awareness’ where a bodily experience ‘shutting one’s eyes’ has developed into a cognitive reasoning. Chinese has a parallel development.

In Halliday’s (1985, p.101-, 1994, p.106-) model of verbal processes, the semantic attribute of the verbs or nouns in expressions is identified to distinguish different lexical process that an expression aims to achieve. For example, the verb ‘pleased’ in *the gift pleased Mary* shows that this expression goes under a mental process, while the verbs ‘caught’ in *the lion caught the tourist* indicates an action that shows this expression is going through a material process, and the ‘knit’ in *knit one’s brow* describes the behavioral process of this expression. I believe that animal and plant metaphors perform specific semantic roles by their different verbal processes and will delve into this issue shortly.

A metaphor is defined in this study as any Mandarin Chinese or German
expression that encodes at least one animal or one plant name, in which the animal or plant name does not refer to the animal or plant itself, but has a figurative meaning. Our data have no recourse to a separate definition of metaphor or of metonymic blending. The debate on metaphor goes back over two millennia to Aristotle’s time. Space precludes a full-scale discussion of the issue. See, for example, Searle (1981, pp.248-85) and Lakoff and Turner (1989, pp.100-39, pp.217-18).

Most of the raw data of this study are collected from corpora. They are Academia Sinica Ancient Chinese Corpus, Academia Sinica Balanced Corpus of Mandarin Chinese, Duden Großwörterbuch Englisch, and the German Corpus Search, Management and Analysis System (COSMAS). The spoken data were observed and gathered from daily conversations with native speakers over the past two years. We have collected 2890 animal metaphors, 3558 plant metaphors in Mandarin Chinese, 2548 animal metaphors, and 3232 plant metaphors in German (see Table 1). They are compiled in our corpora of animal and plant metaphors for comparing and analyzing. For both Mandarin and German examples that are given in this article, morpheme-by-morpheme or word-by-word glosses that show the original structure or imagery are provided between single quotes, and idiomatic translations are given after the equal sign (e.g., que-yue 雀躍 ‘sparrow-leap = jump for joy’).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vehicles</th>
<th>Mandarin Chinese</th>
<th>German</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plant</td>
<td>3558</td>
<td>3232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal</td>
<td>2890</td>
<td>2548</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1 Semantic autonomy versus scientific knowledge

Poetic Metaphor “in service of helping the study of poetry function to promote ethical, social, and personal awareness” (p.214), because “it is vital that we understand our own worldviews and the processes that guide both our everyday understanding and our imagination” (*ibid*). This idea and the issue from where it arises find inspiring support from animal and plant metaphors. Animal and plant metaphors that speakers use every day is for the most part generated from creative speakers, such as poets, novelists, and laypeople, such as farmers. For example, some metaphors, as those shown in (1a) and (1b) appear in classical literature. Those in (2) were created by farmers. Speakers now use all of them in daily life.

1. a. *wang-mei-zhi-ke* 望梅止渴 ‘watch-plum-quench-thirst = to slake thirst by thinking of plums; wishful thinking, imagined satisfaction’ (*Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 *New Account of Tales of the World*)
   
   b. *Nicht alle Blütenräume reifen* ‘not-all-blossom-dreams-ripen = not all hopes will be fulfilled’ (*Prometheus*, by Goethe)

2. a. *yang-mao-chu-zai-yang-shen-shang* 羊毛出在羊身上 ‘sheep-hair-produce-on- sheep-body-aspect = after all, the wool still comes from the sheep's back; in the long run, whatever you are given, you pay for it’
   
   b. *seine Schäfchen scheren bringen* ‘his-lambs-shear-bring = to bring one's sheep to sheepshearing; to feather one's nest’

Animal and plant metaphors typically reflect laypeople’s understanding, which may be at variance with scientific knowledge. No scientific evidence can indicate that pigs are lewd. No biological research proves that the root of a mandrake can bring luck. However, the grunts of a pig and its seemingly nasty sight for some people, together with the character *zhu-ba-jie* 豬八戒 (as in 3a) in the Chinese novel *Journey to the West*, make it “natural” for Mandarin speakers to use the animal metaphor *zhu-ge* 豬哥 (as in 3b) to refer to someone who is lewd. Germans say *Der hat eine Alraune* ‘he-has-a-mandrake’ to mean “one who became rich within a short time.” The root of a mandrake has a shape like a human and is
supposed to be a magic plant that can bring luck and wealth for the Germans. A linguistic manifestation, or more precisely, semantic autonomy is operating here, as will be discussed below.

(3) a. zhu-ba-jie 豬八戒 ‘pig-eight-precept = one of the chief characters in pilgrimage to the west, who was supposedly incarnated through the spirit of a pig, a symbol of man’s cupidity and lust’
b. zhu-ge 豬哥 ‘pig-brother = lewdster’

These examples reflect semantic autonomy, that is, there is no scientific reason to explain their meanings. Semantic autonomy is based on a specific person’s experience and not necessarily on every speaker’s experience. The use of animals and plants in expression of human thought comes from human beings’ biological and habitational intimacy with them. Farmers develop notions about nature when they cultivate plants and raise animals. What plants are like and how animals behave are from farmers’ personal experience, knowledge, and associations. Poets express their emotions through the natural world and frequently express their sentiments based on their experiences with plants and animals. Metaphoric understanding of a given emotion will therefore be articulated through plants and animals. If they are widely circulated, these expressions then became part of everyday use.

Table 2 lists the associations between the animals/plants and their meanings in both languages. “Appearance”, “human-animal relation” and “cultural association” are the three categories that are most likely to be associated with the animals and plants. For example, beans are small and melons have round shapes, just as the following expressions show: mu-guang-ru-dou 目光如豆 ‘eye-sight-like-bean = of narrow vision’ and nao-dai-gua 脳袋瓜 ‘brain-melon = head’ in which the former refers to someone’s vision is as short as the small size of a bean, and the latter indicates the shape of human brain is like that of a melon. On the other hand, Schmeichelkatze (flattering cat – a flattering woman) in German shows a “human-animal relation”. Schmeichelkatze indicates ‘flattering female’ is associated
with the behavior of a pet cat that lies on her master’s lap. As for “cultural association”, an example is san-zi 桑梓 ‘mulberry-catalpa’. San-zi alludes to ‘childhood hometown’ as mulberry and catalpa were planted beside houses in the old days. The leaves of mulberry were used for raising silkworm and the wood of the catalpa was for making family utensils. Later on, san-zi was used to refer to one’s native village where one was born and brought up, even though mulberry and catalpa are not seen beside modern houses. Expressions of this type are associated with peculiar cultural customs or historical events.

The corpora indicate that a great number of metaphors are generated from the “appearance” of animals and plants. These appearance-based metaphors account for 25.6% (Mandarin) and 20.0% (German) animal corpus; 42.3% (Mandarin) and 30.6% (German) plant corpus. Not to be overshadowed this, even more plant metaphors are generated from their “function” used by men: 41.6% in German, and 24.9% in Mandarin, for example, wood is construction material, thus Holzbau ‘wood-construction = wood-frame construction’ and liang-mu 梁木 ‘beam’ are used metaphorically in German and Mandarin respectively.

Hsieh, Lien & Meier (2005, pp.115-16) suggest that Mandarin speakers produce more plant metaphors based on what they see; the appearance of plants. The Germans, on the other hand, tend to have a more functional standpoint and use more fruits and vegetables (usability and edibility) to mark their metaphors. It is noted that “appearance” and “function” can be connected to different cultural ideologies of the peoples. Trees, for instance, can be observed and interpreted from different standpoints in these two cultures. The German plant metaphor der ganze Christbaumschmuck ‘the-whole-Christmas-tree-decoration = all of one's medals of honour’ observed the function of a tree that serves as a Christmas tree, then a connection between the multi-colored Christmas decorations and the multi-colored badges and medals a general wears. But Mandarin shu-yu-jing-er-feng-bu-zhi, zi-yu-yang-er-qin-bu-dai 树欲静而风不止 子欲養而親不待 ‘tree-desire-stillness-yet-wind-not-stop son-desires-raise-yet-parents-not-remain = a son’s regret at not being able to serve parents in their old age’ sees the move of tree and leaves when the wind blows. The associations have to do with the respective
cultures. The Germans celebrate Christmas while the Chinese value filial piety. Metaphors are rooted in culture; many metaphors that are categorized under ‘appearance’ etc. are also associated with “culture” and their association with “appearance” is arbitrary to people of other cultures.

We see that the cultural association enjoys 27.9% in Mandarin and 20.7% in German animal metaphors, and 10% in Mandarin and 24.9% in German plant metaphors. They are the associations with legends, religions, customs, life philosophy, or simply for comparison (e.g., xiao-shu-yao-kan xiao-hai-yao-guan 小樹要砍 小孩要管 ‘small-tree-should-hack, small-child-should-discipline = one should educate and discipline children starting from a young age’). They are arbitrary inventions that have no intrinsic relationship between the chosen vehicles and the meaning of the metaphors. The association “human-animal relation” in animal corpora takes 21.1% in Mandarin and 18.8% in German. This has to do with watchdogs, cow trailers, horse riding, etc. Examples are like der Fisch hat angebissen (the fish took the bait – a person took the bait), and niu’che 牛車 (cow-car – a very slow car).

Table 2. The Associations of Animal and Plant Metaphors in Mandarin Chinese and German Corpora

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Associations</th>
<th>Mandarin (%)</th>
<th>German (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANIMAL METAPHOR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human-Animal Relation</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 As mentioned, a metaphor can be categorized into more than one type when we analyze its associations, e.g., qian’xi/chong 千鴿 (millennium-bug = y2p; year 2000 computer problem) can be associated with the small size of the bug – appearance, and the harm that it brings – behavior. Therefore, the total percentage of the associations of, for example, animal metaphors in Mandarin is 110%, in German is 105%.

2 Associations such as “behavior” and “habit” etc. are not listed in Table 2 in order to present the necessary data more clearly.
Whether “appearance”, “human-animal relation” or “function”, all of them are generated from human experience, either from visual perception, eating habits, or other aspects of animal and plants. Historically, Lay people’s knowledge became a source of language and common sense; later on it became general linguistic cognition. Language users readily accept usage of familiar words like animal and plant names that do not convey their normal meanings, i.e., plant names do not refer to plants, animal names do not stand for animals. Animal and plant metaphors are often used in funny, imaginative, or memorable ways, and, therefore, popular.

Human experience, in particular those of farmers, poets and novelists, is the base of animal and plant metaphors. However, the experience is different from the impressions that people have toward the respective animals or plants. Although language and culture are inseparably intertwined, they are not identical; i.e. although Germans speak about cats as false, flattering, gluttonous etc., they might consider the animal cat rather as cuddly, soft and intelligent. How people perceive an animal/plant and how people use that specific animal/plant name metaphorically in their linguistic code lie on different levels in speakers’ minds. Our daily-life language has semantic autonomy.

However, there is interaction between language and conceptions backed up by science which is summarized in Table 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural association</th>
<th>27.9%</th>
<th>20.7%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PLANT METAPHOR</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural philosophy</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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3 Strictly speaking, if they were identical, they couldn’t be intertwined: nothing can be intertwined with itself.
Table 3. Lay People’s View and Scientific View in Languages

Possibilities / Interaction of the views

I. farmer’s knowledge and understanding, poet’s imagination and rhetoric determine people’s language usage, views, and conceptions

II. a. scientific discoveries influence people’s views
   b. scientific discoveries determine people’s language usage and conceptions
   c. scientific discoveries change people’s views and conceptions

III. coexistence: farmer’s knowledge and understanding, poet’s imagination and rhetoric, and scientific discoveries coexist in people’s language use

Table 3 (I) shows that animal and plant metaphors typically reflect laypeople’s understanding that may be at variance with scientific knowledge. However, when scientific discoveries contradict what metaphors say a language user’s views and concepts can be influenced (IIa). Take metaphors in (4) for examples. Germans have a metaphor to describe people who cannot get along well with each other, (4a) ‘living like dogs and cats’, and Mandarin speakers mock at a dirty place as a ‘pigpen’ (4c), although zoological research found that dogs can get along well with cats and that pigs are clean (e.g., Grzimek 1988, p.20). Language users’ knowledge may change accordingly, but their language use need not be. For this reason, we have not found metaphors relating that pigs are clean or that dogs can get along well with cats.

(4) a. wie Hund und Katze leben ‘as-dog-and-cat-live = they can't get along with each other’
   b. chong-ya 蟲牙 ‘worm-tooth = a carious tooth’
   c. zhu-juan 豬圈 ‘pig-pen = pigpen; hog pen’
   d. Schweinestall ‘pigpen = pigsty; a mess’

On the other hand, scientific discovery may offer new metaphors and thereby determine folk-language usage and conception (Table 3, IIb); e.g., (5a) qian-xi-chong 千禧蟲 was coined and used in Mandarin. It is the millennium bug translated from English. It was feared that in the year 2000, many computers would
develop problems because most computer programs were designed to store only the last two digits of the year on all dates. Many people said that when the year 2000 came, these programs would be unable to distinguish the 00 for the year 2000 from the 00 for the year 1900. This discrepancy was believed to be going to cause widespread technical problems in worldwide legal and financial domains. Although these fears were not realized, they entered speakers’ minds via this term. When such a new metaphor spreads, people’s conceptions can change (Table 3, IIc). They gain a new concept and the new science-based metaphors coexist with other metaphors (Table 3, III).

(5) a. qian-xi-chong 千禧蟲 ‘millenium-worm = [computer] y2k millennium bug’
   b. Kleeblatt ‘cloverleaf [intersection] = a special intersection shaped like a cloverleaf’

2.2 Metaphors and nature

Animal and plant metaphors have different generic levels from that of science; however, the macro essence of language and nature seems to overlap. That is to say, the linguistic manifestation of animal metaphors coincides with an animal’s ability to move from place to place, and plant metaphors correspond with a plant’s lack of this ability. Most animal names are used to denote active motions and activities, such as (6a) quan-ma-zhi-lao 犬馬之勞 meaning ‘work like a dog or a horse’. Most plant names imply motionless states, such as (6b) yi-ye-zhi-qiu 一葉知秋 meaning ‘one falling leaf is indicative of the coming of autumn; everything is part of a whole’. This section discusses the observation that animal metaphors are active expressions whereas plant metaphors are static for the purpose of revealing the overlap between nature and these expressions.4

4 This is not to say that no animal expressions are static expressions and no plant metaphors are active, for example the plant expression nian-hua-re-cao 扳花惹草 ‘pick up flower-induce-grass = have many love affair; to be promiscuous in sex relations’ indicates active behaviour. However, the data we have collected so far demonstrate a much higher percentage of the result presented.
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(6) a. quan-ma-zhi-lao 犬馬之勞 ‘dog-horse-[modifier marker]-labor = work like a dog or a horse’
   b. yi-ye-zhi-qiu 一葉知秋 ‘one-leaf-know-autumn = one falling leaf is indicative of the coming of autumn; everything is part of a whole’.

The word “animal” is coined as *dong-wu* 動物 (moving object) in Mandarin. Middle High German *Tier* (animal) meant wild beasts. We see animals jump, run, swim, and fly. Both Mandarin and German like to associate fish with swimming and birds with flying, as the metaphors in (7) show. Animal metaphors express rich motions, more than human beings are capable of. Plants are seen as motionless; they do not move about, and though they grow, blossom, and bear fruit, their motions are not as obvious as those of humans and other animals (Tompkins and Bird 1973). This trait of seeming motionlessness is coined in languages to show the steady and staid, such as in (8). In (8a), for example, *gang-yi-mu-na* 剛毅木訥 describes someone as resolute and steadfast, honest but perhaps slow-witted. It is used especially for a man who doesn’t talk much but is reliable.

(7) a. fu-di-you-yu 釜底游魚 ‘caldron-bottom-swim-fish = a fish swimming in the bottom of a caldron; a person whose fate is sealed’
   b. schwimmt wie ein Fisch ‘swims like a fish = an excellent swimmer’
   c. lao-yan-fen-fei 勞燕分飛 ‘bird-swallow-separate-fly = be like birds flying in different directions; separation’
   d. der Vogel ist ausgeflogen ‘the bird has flown out = the criminal ran away and can't be caught’

(8) a. gang-yi-mu-na 剛毅木訥 ‘sturdy-resolute-wood-honest = a tough, steadfast, determined, simple and honest person’
   b. song-bo-zhi-mao 松柏之茂 ‘pine-cypress-[modifier marker]-exuberant = the ong lasting; dateless’
   c. ein Körnchen Wahrheit ‘a-grain-truth = a bit of truth’
   d. ein Gemüt wie ein Veilchen haben ‘a-mind-like-a-violet-have = to have
the mind of a violet; to be rough and emotionless’

Our corpora give evidence of the activity of animal metaphors and the stasis of plant metaphors from many aspects. Halliday’s (1985) model of verbal processes can be the basis for the description of predicates in metaphors. Observing the verbal process of the metaphors in our corpora, animal metaphors are involved more in behavioral processes, but the plant corpus has more perception words that are associated with mental processes (see Table 4). For the behavioral processes, verbs like laugh, dance, spring, etc. are used, while perception words such as eyes and ears are used for the mental processes.

Subsequently, observing meanings of these metaphors, aspects of experience like “harm,” “intensity,” and “desire” appear more in the corpus of animal metaphors, whereas “existence,” “control,” and “difficulty” emerge more in the corpus of plant metaphors. Furthermore, not only are the meanings of the metaphors that have motions, such as diligence (example 9), expressed in terms of animal names, but those meaning modesty or patience (example 10) that describe less physical motion, are full of actions in their verbal processes. The metaphors are therefore mainly based on the main mappings in which animal metaphorical vehicles relate to active expressions, while plant metaphorical vehicles relate to static expressions.

(9) Metaphors denote diligence:
   a. wen-ji-qí-wú 聽雞起舞 ‘hear-chicken-get up-dance = to wake with the rooster; diligent and full of enthusiasm’
   b. emsige Biene ‘busy bee = a busy person’

(10) Metaphors denote modesty or patience:
   a. man-zhí-tú-ya 滿紙塗鴉 ‘full-paper-draw-crow = very poor writing; to scrawl’
   b. jemandem zu reden wie einem lähmen Esel ‘to persuade someone like a lame donkey = to keep on persuading with high patience’
Table 4. Verbal Processes of Animal Metaphors and Plant Metaphors in German

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal processes</th>
<th>Metaphors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>behavioral</td>
<td>- da lachen ja die Hühner (This makes the chicken laugh = Don’t make me laugh);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- tanzen wie ein Hirsch (dance like a stag = dance very well [of a man]);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Hechtsprung (pike-jump = flying dive);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- das hat der Fuchs gemessen, und den Schwanz dazugegeben (the fox measured this, including his tail = the distance is larger than expected);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- wie ein Pinguin laufen (walk like a penguin = to waddle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mental</td>
<td>- danken mit einer Träne im Knopfloch und einer Nelke im Auge (thank with a tear in one's buttonhole and a carnation in one's eye = thank someone ironically moved to tears);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- einem ein Dorn im Auge sein (one a thorn be in the eye = to be a thorn in one's flesh);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Tomaten auf den Augen haben (to have tomatoes on the eyes = to overlook something);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Bohnen in den Ohren haben (to have beans in one's ears = not to be hearing very well);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Da bleiben so viel Äpfel als Birnen (there remain so many apples as pears = this question is not decidable);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Er ist keine faule Birne wert (he is not even worth a rotten pear = he’s a good-for-nothing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Noticeably, however, almost all animal metaphors are active, i.e., their idiomatic meanings have to do with action and motion. But a large number of animal names have no referential meaning; they serve merely as intensifiers in their metaphors. “Intensifier” is a universal semantic primitive (Wierzbicka 1995). In examples (11a) and (11c), the word Affen ‘monkeys’ works as an intensifier in each case. Such animal names now have abstract meaning and serve to increase the tone or mood. They gradually undergo grammaticalization, i.e., they lose or mitigate their semantic functions and work more as grammatical units.
Intensifiers:

a. hou-ji 猴急 ‘monkey-rush = very impatient’

b. niu-yin 牛飲 ‘oxen-drink = booze’

c. Affenhitze ‘monkey-heat = sizzling heat’

d. saubillig ‘sow-cheap = very cheap’

The vocabulary offers clues about how speakers conceptualize the world, how they organize their knowledge, and how deep their knowledge goes in specific areas (Johnson, 1996). When examining plant metaphors, Hellsten (2000, p.217) says that they “had many features in common from which to select… the use of metaphors may have been, in this case, purposeful rather than unconscious.” Whether consciously or unconsciously, the sharing features speak for the agreement of this level of metaphors and nature. As Talmy (2000, p.414) points out, language marks a two-way distinction: “the tendency is either toward motion or toward rest—or, more generally, toward action or toward inaction.” This statement wins support in the contrast of animal metaphors and plant metaphors.

3. Conclusion

I have shown that linguistic cognition works on a different plane than scientific knowledge, and that there is an overlap between nature and linguistic cognition, which relies much on laymen’s perceptions.

At this point, we may review cognitive scientists’ approaches as follows:

i. Lakoff (1987, p.221) declares that metaphor exists at a deeper level than linguistic expression. This paper demonstrates that animal and plant metaphors have different generic levels from that of science and are mostly created by laymen. The generating point of such metaphor and the impression that speakers have toward that specific animal or plant is often in different generic levels. Questions like “why is cat (or dog …) chosen” are often posed by language learners, scientists as well as linguists. For example, the Germans have hangover expressions that encode different animal names,

5 See Lakoff and Turner (1989, p.89) for a different point of view.
such as *einen Affen sitzen haben* (a-monkey-sit-have = they have a monkey [sitting in one’s head]; they are drunk) and *einen Kater haben* (a-tomcat-have = they have a tomcat; they have a hangover). But why are monkey and tomcat chosen here? Linguists have different explanations or speculations.\(^6\) A popular German student joke says that when someone is drunk, *einen Affen sitzen haben* (a-monkey-sit-have = to be drunk). When he is sober, *einen Kater haben* (have-a-tomcat = to have a hangover). These students mock that turning from a monkey to a tomcat overnight is a zoological miracle.

ii. Kövecses studies metaphors that express emotions and suggests that most of these metaphors are stable through time (2000, p.27). What is the rationale that makes metaphors stable? I venture the claim that the reason is because these metaphors are associated with nature in essence; i.e., in both Mandarin and German, animal metaphors are used as active expressions whereas plant metaphors are used as static ones. For example, animals tend to be adopted for attributes like diligence (see examples in 9) and intensity (see examples in 11), and plants are more for static mental process (see Table 4).

iii. Moreover, Atran (1990, p.219) assumes that plant names are convenient choices for describing human or human society. Based on the above study, we add that both animal and plant names are commonly used to encode humans and human society. They work in different domains, just as they do in nature, and function complementarily in language as a whole.

Animals and plant species have biological features similar to those of humans. They jointly play important roles in our languages. While animal metaphors are active expressions, plant metaphors are static ones. Language has the quality of nature. It is changing in its speed and in its way; allows minimum human control. Languages make good use of material from nature based on human bodily experiences to influence human cognition.

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\(^6\) For linguists’ different explanations for why is Kater ‘tomcat’ used in many expressions to express sobriety, see e.g., Röhrich 1991, and Hsieh 2001.
Acknowledgements

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the International Conference of Language, Culture and Mind, University of Portsmouth, England, July 18-20, 2004. I am indebted to Sue Hu, Gary Palmer, Claudine Korall, Sotaro Kita and those who attended, for their insightful comments and questions. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and advice. As well, I thank my assistants Liu Sheng-Min, Lin Chih-Chen and Lin En-Yu—their hard work made this research possible. The study reported here is partly supported by a research grant from the National Science Council (NSC 95-2411-H-006-032).

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