What Animals Reveal about Grammar and Culture: A Study of Animal Metaphors in Mandarin Chinese and English

Shu-Fen Chen
Department of Chinese Literature
National Tsing Hua University
Associate Professor

Li-Chi Lee Chen
Department of English
National University of Tainan
Adjunct Instructor

Abstract

This study compares the use of animal metaphors between Mandarin- and English-speaking societies. We adopt the Great Chain Metaphor as the theoretical framework, and employ semantic molecules in the analysis. The findings of this study are as follows: First, animal terms in Mandarin and English can be used as denominal verbs. In English, these verbs can be used transitively (*fox* the people) and intransitively (*chicken* out of a fight). By contrast, Mandarin has significantly fewer animal terms that can be used as denominal verbs, most of which are static verbs. Among them, many are collocated with human relations (*ji1po2* 雞婆 "chicken-grandmother; to be a busybody") or body parts (*zhu1tou2* 豬頭 "pig-head; to be stupid"). Animal metaphors reflect cultural history, and different animal metaphors used in various cultures may possess the same connotations. For example, metaphors with *niu2* 牛 "cattle" in Mandarin correspond to those with "horse" in English (*li4da4ru2niu2* 力大如牛 "power-big-as-cattle; as strong as an ox" vs. "as strong as a horse"). Additionally, metaphors with *hu3* 虎 "tiger" in Mandarin are similar to metaphors with "lion" in English, most of which are presented positively (*hu3jiang4* 虎將 "tiger-general; a general as brave as a tiger" vs. "as regal as a lion"). People from different cultures may regard the same animals differently. Dogs, for example, are viewed differently by the two cultures. English speakers have a

Corresponding author: Li-Chi Lee Chen, E-mail: rikkitainan@gmail.com
Manuscript received: 2011/05/30; Modified: 2011/07/19, 2011/08/10; Accepted: 2011/09/14.

high opinion of dogs, while Mandarin speakers despise them (*lao3gou3* 老狗 "old-dog; a cunning guy" vs. "old dog; an experienced person"). In summary, numerous aspects of animal metaphors are culture-specific and are, therefore, perceived differently by people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: animal metaphors, denominal verbs, gender bias, semantic derogation, semantic molecules

1. Introduction

Metaphors are traditionally viewed as merely an embellishment for languages or a trope typical of poetic fancy and rhetorical embroidery. However, this language device should no longer be considered only within the realm of language since metaphors are pervasive in our daily life, and how we think or act is basically metaphorical in nature (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). In other words, metaphors reflect the cognitive source of human thinking, and our daily language use is largely connected with metaphors.

Among all types of metaphors and metonyms, animal metaphors which contain the animal species are broadly used to specify human beings or objects. Due to the prevalence of animals around us, animal metaphors are ubiquitous in world languages. As Talebinejad and Dastjerdi (2005) observe, many aspects of animal metaphors are culture-specific. For example, shark is a "dishonest person," a "swindler" in English, but a "man with no or very little beard growing on him" in Persian. In Mandarin Chinese (hereafter Mandarin), for example, when someone is referred to as being stupid or brainless, s/he might be called *xiang4zhu1yi2yang4ben4* 像豬一樣笨 "like-pig-same-stupid; as stupid as a pig." Pigs, on the other hand, connote happy animals in English, as in "(somebody is) as happy as a pig in shit" or "(somebody is) in pig/hog heaven," both of which are used to describe an extremely happy and carefree person.

Although the use of animal metaphors is influenced by culture, there is fairly general agreement that most animal metaphors are pejorative when used to specify human beings. Hsieh's (2006) study has found that most animal expressions are used to abuse people, some of which may even imply sexist bias. Indeed, as Fontecha and Catalán (2003) acutely point out, most animal metaphors are derogatory in semantic nature, which can be understood from the perspective of hierarchy since they imply a vertical hierarchical organization of beings. By applying animal metaphors, one can derogate others (human beings, i.e., higher order forms of being) by characterizing them as animals (non-human beings, i.e., lower order forms of being).

In addition, since in pragmatics metaphors can be elaborated as exploitations or floutings of the maxim of Quality, animal metaphors can be thought of as a type of conversational implicature (Grice 1975). Any conversational implicature generated in a speaker's utterances is simply an inference type and not a fact, and therefore can be cancelled or denied in certain contexts. With this characteristic of "defeasibility," politicians are inclined to use animal metaphors to verbally attack their political rivals. Kuo (2003) analyzes the use of animal metaphors in five televised political debates of the

1998 Taipei mayoral election. She has found that metaphors of this class are overwhelmingly employed by two of the three candidates to denigrate their debating opponents. For instance, the GOOD MAYOR IS HEN metaphor is employed by one candidate to compare the incumbent mayor to a rooster, which cannot lay eggs, thereby implicitly criticizing the incumbent mayor's municipal management. Kuo also notices that the largest number of negative metaphors is found in the final debate, pointing out the fact that with the coming of the election day, the antagonism among the three candidates seems to increase gradually.[1]

Although a great deal of research has been done on animal metaphors, what seems to be lacking is a systematic, cross-linguistic comparison. Therefore, the present study is conducted with the aim of comparing animal metaphors used in Mandarin and English. In the following, Section 2 describes the theoretical framework of this study and the data used for analysis. Section 3 analyzes how animal metaphors are used in Mandarin and English, respectively, and explores how the use of animal metaphors reflects cultural heritage and gender bias in these two languages. Finally, Section 4 summarizes and concludes our findings.

2. Research Framework

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claim that metaphors are fundamental to the structuring of our thought and language, and that we often use the concepts from one semantic area to think and talk about other areas. Conceptual metaphor theory has been remarkably influential in cognitive science, and has cross-cultural implications. In this study, we are interested in animal metaphors in which there is a mapping from the domain of animals unto that of human beings. The theoretical framework of the present study is the Great Chain Metaphor proposed by Lakoff and Turner (1989). The basic Great Chain includes different forms of being. Each form, based on its attributes and behavior, is allocated a place in a hierarchy. Humans are the highest order forms of being, and animals the lower order ones, then plants, complex objects, and natural physical things. In the Great Chain Metaphor, "things" are closely related to each other in the world, and humans are understood metaphorically as animals and inanimate things. Applying this model to our analysis of animal metaphors, thus, helps

[1]Although animal metaphors are frequently employed as negative-other presentation in Kuo's (2003) study, she also indicates that a few instances of animal metaphors are used as positive self-presentation, such as the MAYOR IS WATER BUFFALO metaphor, which is used as the source domain to embody the mayor's diligence and efforts. It also functions as a linguistic device for the mayor to exculpate his rude and abrasive rhetorical style, since the water buffalo is the most valued animal by farmers in traditional Chinese agricultural society.

us to see how human traits are mapped onto animals and how animal traits are mapped onto humans. In particular, there are the conceptual metaphors: HUMANS ARE ANIMALS, OBJECTIONABLE HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS ANIMAL BEHAVIOR, and OBJECTIONABLE PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS (Kövecses 2002).

> How did these animal-related words acquire, then, their metaphorical meaning? The only way these meanings can have emerged is that humans attributed human characteristics to animals and then reapplied these characteristics to humans. That is, animals were personified first, and then the "human-based animal characteristics" were used to understand human behavior. (Kövecses 2002, 125)

To compare how animal metaphors are used in Mandarin- and English-speaking societies, we also employ "semantic molecules" (Goddard 1998; Halupka-Rešetar and Radić 2003; Hsieh 2006; Martsa 1999; Wierzbicka 1985) to analyze our data. In studying animal terms, Wierzbicka (1985) presents explications that contain semantically complex words. Goddard (1998) goes a step further in developing Wierzbicka's idea and calls these words "semantic molecules," which are native speakers' semantic competence or knowledge. As speakers with different cultural backgrounds may perceive animals differently, which is further reflected in their languages, "semantic molecules" thus help to explicate why Mandarin and English speakers choose different animals for the same connotation.

The data for the present study consist of animal metaphors used in Mandarin and English, which may include metaphorical phrases, idioms, slang, proverbs, allusions, habitual collocations, etc. Fixed expressions and short sentences containing animal terms are also included in our data, since they have gradually become daily expressions and are used quite often. The Mandarin data are mainly based on the authors' linguistic intuition and knowledge of this language. Internet resources and The Great Dictionary of the Chinese Language (*Han4yu3 Da4 Ci2dian3* 漢語大詞典)[2] are also used as a supplement to the corpus of Mandarin. Additionally, we adopt *Han4yu3 Pin1yin1* 漢語拼音 for the transcription of the Mandarin data. As Mandarin is a tonal language, the number for the tone will be added beside each transcribed character (i.e., *pin1yin1* 拼音).[3] The traditional Chinese

[2]The Commercial Press. *Hanyu Da Cidian (The Great Dictionary of the Chinese Language): CD Rom Traditional Chinese Version 3.0* (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2007).

[3]The number for each tone is as the following: 1 is for the high-level tone, 2 for the rising tone, 3 for the low or dipping tone, 4 for the falling or high-falling tone, and 5 for the neutral tone.

characters will also be used, followed by morphemic glosses and English translation. On the other hand, the English data come from previous studies, books, and dictionaries (e.g., Clark and Clark 1979; Deignan 2005; Lyman 1983; Zhang 2003). We also use Internet resources and interview English native speakers for additional empirical data.

3. Animal Metaphors, Grammar, and Culture

Animal metaphors are used differently in different languages and cultures. As Fei (2005) argues, traditional habits, people's mental status, social surroundings, etc., all have some influence on the structure of metaphors. In other words, people who speak different languages may employ different animal metaphors to present the same ideas. They may also choose the same animal metaphor with different connotations. However, the difference exists not only in the cognitive source of human thinking, but also in the grammar per se. More specifically, animal species in different languages may be used in different grammatical constructions that might further reflect how people think, as in denominalization of animal terms.

3.1. Animal Terms Used as Denominal Verbs

In this section, we would like to start with a simple observation on the denominalization of animal terms in Mandarin and English, in which animal terms can be used as verbs that are derived from their corresponding nouns. These verbs have been referred to as "denominal verbs." Goatly (1997) indicates that denominal verbs are related to metaphor based on the fact that conversion itself gives rise to metaphorical changes. Deignan (2005) also states that "straightforward grammatical conversions should be considered metaphors." She further asserts that animal metaphors are frequently verbal because they are used to talk about ways of behaving. Noun-noun animal metaphors such as "He is a lion" or "Richard is a gorilla" are quite rare.

It is found in our study that fewer animal terms used as denominal verbs are found in Mandarin than in English; that is, English has more animal terms that can be used as denominal verbs, more specifically, as "agent verbs" in Clark and Clark's (1979) terms. In addition, English animal terms can be used as transitive and intransitive verbs, some of which are listed below:[4]

[4]The English data used here are cited from Clark and Clark (1979, 774) and Deignan (2005). Also see Zhang (2003) for additional English animal terms that are used as denominal verbs.

1. Transitive Verbs: *fox* the people, *outfox* his followers, *parrot* every word, *dog* the escapee, *bird-dog* the escapee, *watchdog* the house, *hound* the politician, *ape* the policeman, *copycat* the teacher, *ferret* out the burglar, *squirrel* away the money, *buffalo* the audience, *wolf* the food down.
2. Intransitive Verbs: *worm* out of a commitment, *chicken* out of a fight, *pig* at the dinner-table, *snake* through the cars, *duck* down, *leech* (to, onto), *rat* on the fugitive, *clam* up, *buck* up, *monkey* with the door, *hare* down the road, *rabbit* along at 90 miles an hour (talk fast), *skylark*, *crane*, *beef* about the food, *moused* along the parkside, *crow* about something, *peacocked* about his ancestry, *horse* around, *weasel* out of the promises, *hare* around to her flat, *bitch* about someone, *rat* on each other.

Mandarin, on the other hand, has far fewer animal terms that can be used as denominal verbs, most of which are static verbs. Among them, many are collocated with human relations or body parts, as listed below:

1. Dynamic Verbs:
   (1) *niao3* 鳥 "bird; to treat someone coldly, not to take someone seriously"
   (2) *mao1* 貓 "cat; to bend down like a cat, to stoop, to hide"
2. Static Verbs:
   (1) *ji1po2* 雞婆 "chicken-grandmother; to be a busybody"
   (2) *zhu1ge1* 豬哥 "pig-elder brother; to be lustful"
   (3) *zhu1tou2* 豬頭 "pig-head; to be stupid, to be unaware of the present situation"[5]
   (4) *gou3tui3* 狗腿 "dog-leg; to be a lackey"
   (5) *gui1mao2* 龜毛 "turtle-hair; to be picky"
   (6) *huang2niu2* 黃牛 "yellow-cattle; to renege on a promise"
   (7) *lü2* 驢 "donkey; to make oneself look stupid"
   (8) *niu2* 牛 "cattle; to boast, brag, blast, talk big"

As we can see from the above, there are just a few animal terms in Mandarin that can be used as denominal verbs. Among them, only *niao3* 鳥 and *mao1* 貓 are dynamic verbs. *Niao3* 鳥 conveys the connotation of "treating someone coldly" or "not taking someone seriously." It can also be used as a denominal adjective, but the meaning, then, changes. As an adjective, *niao3* 鳥 is used to describe that someone or something sucks. The other dynamic verb *mao1* 貓 is a polysemous verb. One meaning is "to stoop," and the other, "to hide." The rest are static verbs. Among them, the first

[5]Although *zhu1tou2* 豬頭 conveys negative meanings in most cases, this expression when used as a noun can be presented positively. Lovers (especially female ones) sometimes use *zhu1tou2* 豬頭 as an address form when they flirt with each other.

five animal terms *ji1po2* 雞婆, *zhu1ge1* 豬哥, *zhu1tou2* 豬頭, *gou3tui3* 狗腿, and *gui1mao2* 龜毛 either show human relations (e.g., *po2* 婆 "grandmother," *ge1* 哥 "elder brother") or contain body parts (e.g., *tou2* 頭 "head," *tui3* 腿 "leg," *mao2* 毛 "hair"). In addition, these animal terms are fixed expressions. Take *ji1po2* 雞婆 for example, the word *ji1* 雞 "chicken" should be juxtaposed with *po2* 婆 "grandmother" to connote a busybody. If it is used with another word, its meaning will change or even be meaningless. Therefore, people's perception of these verbs is firmly fixed, and it is hard to misinterpret them. This can be explained when we borrow Morgan's (1978, 274) term of "short-circuited implicature," which states that when a linguistic expression is recursively used in a certain context, it becomes what we call "common knowledge" and is understood and correctly perceived by listeners. The above further shows that most denominal verbs based on animal terms in Mandarin are usually collocated with another word, as shown by the first six animal metaphors of static verbs. In other words, four out of the ten animal metaphors, about 40% of the denominal verbs are formed by zero derivation. However, in English the percentage is much higher; that is, about 90% are zero derivations.

Interestingly, *ji1po2* 雞婆, *zhu1ge1* 豬哥, *zhu1tou2* 豬頭, *gou3tui3* 狗腿, and *gui1mao2* 龜毛 can also be used as denominal adjectives in that they can be modified by the Mandarin adverbs *hen3* 很 "very," *fei1chang2* 非常 "very," etc. Note that, however, the words *po2* 婆 "grandmother" and *ge1* 哥 "elder brother" indicate the genders of the target domains in the metaphors, but *ji1po2* 雞婆 is no longer restricted to females and has become a gender-neutral term in modern Mandarin, since males can also be a busybody. Different from the first five animal terms, the sixth animal term *huang2niu2* 黃牛 neither contains any body parts nor shows human relations. It literally refers to the yellow cattle, and is used to connote "breaking one's promise." In addition, *huang2niu2* 黃牛 cannot be used as a denominal adjective; it can be used only as a noun or as a verb. The last two animal terms *lü2* 驢 and *niu2* 牛, with only one character (i.e., animal species only), can be used as both denominal verbs and adjectives.[6] All these eight animal terms connote negative meanings and therefore are found to frequently appear in negative imperative sentences when used as verbs. For example, they are inclined to co-occur with Mandarin imperative negators (e.g., *bie2* 別, *bu2yao4* 不要, etc.), as in *bie2huang2niu2* 別黃牛 "do not renege on a promise" and *bu2yao4ji1po2* 不要雞婆

[6]When used as an adjective, *niu2* 牛 means "being formidable," as in *hen3niu2* 很牛 "very-cattle; very formidable." Note that, however, not all native speakers of Mandarin use *niu2* 牛 as an adjective. People in Taiwan, for example, do not use *niu2* 牛 as an adjective. When used as a verb, on the other hand, *niu2* 牛 conveys the meaning of boasting, bragging, or talking big. In Taiwan, *chui1niu2* 吹牛 "blow-cattle; to boast, brag, blast, talk big" is used for the same connotation.

"do not be a busybody."

The above animal terms show that although people from different cultures view animals from different perspectives, most animal terms are used in a negative way. For example, when "pig" is used as a verb to describe the way people eat as in "*pig* at the dinner-table," it shows that pigs are greedy. On the other hand, the word *zhu1ge1* 豬哥 in Mandarin shows that pigs are viewed as lustful. This might be due to the fact that pigs eat with watering mouths, which is associated with a man desiring women. This perhaps reveals further both English and Mandarin speakers' prejudice against pigs.

Unlike Mandarin, English has a rich repertoire of denominal verbs. According to Hopper and Thompson's (1984) study, there is a correlation between rich morphology in a language and an abundance of denominal verbs. However, Tai (1997, 463) refutes such an implicational universal and states that "there is no reason to associate the scarcity of denominal verbs in Chinese with a paucity of derivational morphology." There is a universal linguistic fact that denominal verbs are much fewer than deverbal nouns.[7] Tai attributes this asymmetry to a conceptual constraint. More specifically, it is easier to use words to denote actions and events both as verbs and nouns, while it is difficult to use words to denote concrete objects as verbs. Thus, the reason why English has more denominal verbs is due to the fact that the degree of iconicity is higher in Mandarin than in English. Si (1996) points out that the larger amount of denominal verbs are due to the following facts: First, denominal verbs in English come from various sources which include fundamental lexicon, common lexicon, professional lexicon, and even abbreviations and proper nouns, while those in Mandarin are mostly from fundamental lexicon; Second, denominal verbs in Mandarin frequently are from monosyllabic nouns, while those in English can be from monosyllabic (e.g., to *pig*), disyllabic (e.g., to *radio*), or even from compound nouns (e.g., to *strong-man*); Third, denominal verbs in Mandarin are mostly derived from common nouns, while those in English can be derived from common nouns and proper nouns. Zhou (2000) also points out that denominal verbs in Mandarin are mainly coined for figurative speaking, while those in English are formed by a word-formation device, and thus are more productive.

3.2. Animal Metaphors Reflect Cultural Differences

Littlemore (2001, 2003) advocates the view that culture plays a major role in the use of metaphors which are "culturally-loaded expressions." She claims that metaphors can be a stumbling

[7]According to Wang's (2001) study, the number of deverbal nouns are 57 times of that of denominal verbs.

block for foreign students in following lectures at university since students are liable to misinterpret metaphors using different cultural references. Lakoff (1993) also points out that metaphorical mappings vary in universality; some are universal while some are culture-specific. Kövecses (2003) concludes that "conceptual metaphors are just as much cultural entities as they are cognitive ones." Animal metaphors are precisely loaded with meanings related to cultural background. Different cultures might hold different attitudes towards different animals, and some characteristics of animals are more salient in one culture than in another. Dowker (2003) indicates that a British person uses "fox" to mean a "sly and cunning person," while to a Canadian it means an "attractive woman." In Mandarin, both meanings are possible, as shown in *lao3hu2li2* 老狐狸 "old-fox; a cunning person" and *hu2li2jing1* 狐狸精 "fox-spirit; a seductive woman." The ways in which animal metaphors are used are certainly influenced by cultural conventions and experiences. For example, Chinese people rarely see zebras in their culture, so metaphors with the zebra hardly ever appear in Mandarin idioms or proverbs (Wang and Dowker 2008).

3.2.1. Different Animal Metaphors with the Same Connotation

With social development, animal metaphors gradually acquire their established connotations in all languages. However, as people in different regions are surrounded by different animals, it is quite natural for them to associate their feelings, emotions, happenings, and natural phenomena with various animals. In other words, people from different cultures may use different animal metaphors to denote the same meaning. One of the various examples is *dui4niu2tan2qin2* 對牛彈琴 "towards-cattle-play-zither; to play the Chinese zither to an ox" in Mandarin and "to cast pearls before swine" in English, both of which carry the connotation of saying something that goes right over someone's head or preaching to deaf ears.

As the above examples show, *niu2* 牛 "cattle" in Mandarin is metaphorically applied to refer to the wrong audience, whereas in English swine is used to denote the same meaning. Although the two cultures have both animals, the above idioms are culture-specific. For example, the English metaphor is quoted from the Bible: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." As the Bible is a classical Christian work and has influenced the Western art as well as the language, many artists and writers cite materials from the Bible to create their artistic and literary works. In addition, pearls are usually creamy-white in color and are used to describe something that is very precious or should be highly valued, and the idiom "to cast pearls before swine," therefore, implies giving things to those who do not appreciate or understand their value. In Mandarin, on the other hand, the word *qin2*

琴 “zither” refers to *gu3zheng1* 古箏 “Chinese zither,” an old traditional Chinese instrument, and the word *niu2* 牛 “cattle” refers to water buffalo, the most valued animal by farmers in traditional Chinese agricultural society. Therefore, *dui4niu2tan2qin2* 對牛彈琴 is culture-specific, which means that “to play beautiful music to the wrong audience.”

We may know, in passing, that due to the cross-cultural encounter with the U.S. and China, the Japanese use idioms directly translated from English and Mandarin, as in *buta ni shinju* 豚に真珠 “to cast pearls before swine” and *ushi ni taishite koto o dannzu* 牛に対して琴を弾ず “to play the Chinese zither to an ox,” respectively. However, the Japanese language also has its own idiom that carries the same connotation: *uma no mimi ni nenbutsu* 馬の耳に念仏 “to chant the prayer to Amida Buddha in a horse’s ear.”[8] As for the Japanese idiom, we can still tell from *nenbutsu* 念仏 “to chant the prayer to Amida Buddha” that this idiom is culture-specific, in that Japanese people were for so long Buddhists or Sintoists, and they therefore regard Buddhist prayer/chanting as something important.

It is also found in Mandarin and English that different birds are used to describe chill bumps, or the medical term *cutis anserine*, as in *ji1pi2ge1da1* 雞皮疙瘩 “chicken-skin-bump; chicken bumps” in Mandarin and “goose bumps, goose flesh, or goose pimples” in English. The two languages choose different farmyard birds to describe a temporary local change in the skin due to cold, fear, or other stimuli; that is, *ji1* 雞 “chicken” is used in Mandarin whereas goose is chosen in English to denote the same meaning.

Having observed the above animal metaphors and noticed that Mandarin and English speakers may use idioms with the same connotation but different animal metaphors, we can then go on to consider whether in some fixed expressions in Mandarin and English there are corresponding animal metaphors. Not surprisingly, from some metaphorical phrases, idioms, slang, proverbs, allusions, habitual collocations, and so on in Mandarin and English, we have observed that *niu2* 牛 “cattle” in Mandarin is used similarly to “horse” in English in many cases, as listed below:

1. Semantic Molecules: ANIMAL, BODY, BIG, HUGE
   Connotation: to boast, brag, blast, talk big
   Mandarin: *chui1niu2(pi2)* 吹牛(皮) “blow-cattle(skin); to blow an ox”
   English: to talk horse
2. Semantic Molecules: ANIMAL, STRONG, POWERFUL
   Connotation: strong, powerful

[8] This idiom is quoted from Garrison and Goshi (1996, 26).

Mandarin: *li4da4ru2niu2* 力大如牛 “power-big-as-cattle; as strong as an ox”

English: as strong as a horse

3. Semantic Molecules: ANIMAL, EAT, GREEDY, HUNGRY

Connotation: to eat large amounts of food

Mandarin: *niu2yin3* 牛飲 “cattle-drink; to drink like an ox”

niu2si4 牛飼 “cattle-feed; to eat like an ox”

English: to eat like a horse

4. Semantic Molecules: ANIMAL, HARDWORKING

Connotation: to urge someone who needs no urging

Mandarin: *bian1da3kuai4niu2* 鞭打快牛 “lash-hit-quick-cattle; to lash a hardworking ox”

English: to flog/spur a willing horse

5. Semantic Molecules: ANIMAL, SELF-DETERMINED

Connotation: One can show the people around him the way to do things, but he cannot force them to act or make them take the advice.

Mandarin: *niu2bu4he1shui3qiang2an4tou2* 牛不喝水強按頭 “cattle-not-drink-water-force-press-head; to force an ox to drink water when it does not want to”

English: You can take/lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink.

6. Semantic Molecules: ANIMAL, BODY, IMPORTANT

Connotation: It is better to be the leader of a less prestigious group than to be a subordinate in a more prestigious one.[9]

Mandarin: *ning2wei2ji1shou3, bu4wei2niu2hou4* 寧爲雞首，不爲牛後 “willing-be- chicken-head, not-be-cattle-back; Better be the head of a chicken than the ass of an ox.”

English: Better be the head of an ass than the tail of a horse.

7. Semantic Molecules: ANIMAL, POWERFUL

Connotation: a standard unit used to measure the power of engines, cars, etc.

Mandarin: *niu2li4* 牛力 “cattle-power; cattle power”

English: horsepower

8. Semantic Molecules: ANIMAL, HARDWORKING

Connotation: hardworking

Mandarin: *lao3huang2niu2* 老黃牛 “old-yellow-cattle; a willing employee who works as hard as

---

[9]Also compare *ning2wei2ji1tou2, bu4wei2feng4wei3* 寧為雞頭，不為鳳尾 “willing-be-chicken-head, not-be-phoenix-tail; Better be the head of a chicken than the tail of a phoenix” in Mandarin, and “Better be the head of a dog than the tail of a lion” in English.

an old yellow ox does"

English: to work like a horse

From the above, it seems reasonable to suppose that metaphors with *niu2* 牛 "cattle" in Mandarin almost correspond to those with "horse" in English. Both Mandarin and English speakers regard these two animals as being strong and powerful (e.g., "*li4da4ru2niu2* 力大如牛" in Mandarin and "as strong as a horse" in English), and they therefore are used as a standard unit to measure the power of engines, cars, etc. (e.g., "*niu2li4* 牛力" in Mandarin and "horsepower" in English). These two animals are also regarded as drinking or eating a lot (e.g., "*niu2yin3* 牛飲" and "*niu2si4* 牛飼" in Mandarin and "to eat like a horse" in English) and working hard (e.g., "*lao3huang2niu2* 老黃牛" in Mandarin and "to work like a horse" in English).

The reason why the metaphors of *niu2* 牛 "cattle" in Mandarin correspond to those of "horse" in English might be due to their historical backgrounds. In China, the agricultural civilization began quite early, and cattle have long been used for plowing and fertilization. Horses, however, were owned by the minority of people at that time, and were mainly used in wars or to pull chariots. For this reason, the Chinese were more familiar with cattle and were more likely to use them in the language. Anglo-Saxon England, on the other hand, was an off-shore island in Europe and its people (the British) lived on fishery and livestock farming. Although they obtained milk, cheese, meat, and butter from cows (and also from other animals), cows were largely used for food. Horses, on the other hand, were domesticated to pull chariots and to farm. They meant a lot to the British and were more likely to appear in the English language. From the above, we know that horses in Anglo-Saxon England served like cattle in ancient China; they both were kept for plowing and fertilization and were close to people's everyday life.

It seems that *niu2* 牛 "cattle" and "horse" share many characteristics in common and thus are used by people with different cultural backgrounds to form idioms that have the same connotation. In fact, *niu2* 牛 "cattle" and *ma3* 馬 "horse" are frequently juxtaposed to form several idioms in Mandarin, as we can see below:

1. Group I
   (1) *niu2ma3* 牛馬 "cattle-horse; an ox and a horse (to refer to those who are labors or laborious)"
   (2) *niu2sou1ma3bo2* 牛溲馬勃 "ox-urine-horse-dung; plantains and feces mushrooms (to refer to those who are humble but talented)"
   (3) *niu2tong2ma3zou3* 牛童馬走 "cattle-child-horse-walk; cowboys and servants (to refer to those in the position of inferiority)"
   (4) *niu2tou2ma3mian4* 牛頭馬面 "cattle-head-horse-face; (in Buddhism) ghost soldiers in Hell"

(5) *niu2ma3jin1ju1* 牛馬襟裾 “cattle-horse-collar-lapel; a beast in human clothing (to refer to a well-dressed man of beastly temper)”

(6) *niu2ma3zou3* 牛馬走 “cattle-horse-walk; self-effacement in ancient Mandarin, to toil like ox and horse”

(7) *niu2gao1ma3da4* 牛高馬大 “cattle-tall-horse-big; tall, big, and strong”

(8) *zuo4niu2zuo4ma3* 做牛做馬 “do-cattle-do-horse; to do cattle and horses (to imply one’s willingness to be laborious for others)”

2. Group II

(1) *niu2tou2bu2dui4ma3zui3* 牛頭不對馬嘴 “cattle-head-not-match-horse-mouth; horses’ jaws don’t match cows’ heads; incongruous, things that don’t agree, irrelevant”

(2) *niu2ma3xiang1sheng1* 牛馬相生 “cattle-horse-mutual-bear; hybridization (to imply the loss of social etiquette and good manners)”

(3) *niu2ma3feng1* 牛馬風 “cattle-horse-tone; the tone between an ox and a horse (to refer to things that are irrelevant)”

3. Group III

(1) *niu2ji4* 牛驥 “cattle-[fast horse]; an ox and a winged steed (to refer to a simpleton and a sage)”

(2) *niu2ji4gong4lao2* 牛驥共牢 “cattle-[fast horse]-same-fence; an ox and a winged steed are fenced together (to imply treating the simpleton and the sage the same way)”

(3) *niu2ji4tong2cao2* 牛驥同槽 “cattle-[fast horse]-same-trough; an ox and a winged steed share the same trough (to imply treating the simpleton and the sage the same way)”

(4) *niu2ji4tong2zao4* 牛驥同皁 “cattle-[fast horse]-same-grass; an ox and a winged steed are fed the same forages (to imply treating the simpleton and the sage the same way)”

From the above, we can see that the idioms containing *niu2* 牛 “cattle” and *ma3* 馬 “horse” can be categorized into three groups, according to how Mandarin speakers perceive these two animals. The first group which contains eight idioms shows that niu2 牛 “cattle” and *ma3* 馬 “horse” are treated by Chinese people as the same type of animals. For example, the idiom *niu2ma3jin1ju1* 牛馬襟裾 shows that both *niu2* 牛 “cattle” and *ma3* 馬 “horse” represent any kind of beast, metaphorically referring to a well-dressed man of beastly temper. The idiom *niu2gao1ma3da4* 牛高馬大 shows that *niu2* 牛 “cattle” and *ma3* 馬 “horse” are either tall or big, and they are therefore employed to specify the physical appearance of human beings. The second group, with only three idioms, shows that *niu2* 牛 “cattle” and *ma3* 馬 “horse” are sometimes perceived by Chinese people as different animals. For example, the idiom *niu2tou2bu2dui4ma3zui3* 牛頭不對馬嘴 shows that

niu2 牛 "cattle" and *ma3* 馬 "horse" are different in their outward appearances, and therefore this idiom is used to refer to things that are incongruous or irrelevant.

Although *niu2* 牛 "cattle" and *ma3* 馬 "horse" are perceived by Chinese people as either the same or different animals, a few idioms in the third group show that these two animals are different in hierarchy. More specifically, some horses are valued more, as in *niu2ji4* 牛驥, *niu2ji4gong4lao2* 牛驥共牢, *niu2ji4tong2cao2* 牛驥同槽, and *niu2ji4tong2zao4* 牛驥同皁. *Ji4* 驥, known as *qian1li3ma3* 千里馬 "thousand-kilometer-horse; a winged steed" in modern Mandarin, refers to a pedigreed horse with staying power that can sustain long-distance rides. The coordination of *niu2* 牛 "cattle" and *ji4* 驥 "fast horse" further shows that cattle and horses are not only different, but they are also different in hierarchy. Moreover, the existence of *ji4* 驥 or *qian1li3ma3* 千里馬 might be due to the fact that horses were important in ancient China, especially during the war time, and therefore Chinese people categorized horses into two groups: the good one (i.e., *ji4* 驥 "fast horse") and the generic one (i.e., *ma3* 馬 "horse"). This is further reflected in the use of language.

The juxtaposition of *niu2* 牛 "cattle" and *ma3* 馬 "horse," as we can see from the above, also implies that Mandarin speakers tend to think group-centrically. In her corpus-based study of animal expressions in Mandarin and German, Hsieh (2006, 2219) has observed that 11.78% of Mandarin expressions compound two, three, or more animal names in an expression, but only 1.93% of German expressions do. Hsieh further indicates that in creating an expression, Mandarin speakers use an animal name, such as *niu2* 牛 "cattle," to represent the whole family, while German speakers point out every single subject of the animal family. For example, in German there are *ochse* "ox," *bulle* "bull," *büffel* "buffalo," *stier* "bull," *kuh* "cow," and *kalb* "calf" expressions for the cattle family.

In addition to *niu2* 牛 "cattle" and "horse" in Mandarin and English respectively, we have also observed that metaphors with *hu3* 虎 "tiger" in Mandarin correspond to those with "lion" in English. In English, a lion is considered as the king of beasts, so metaphorically a lion is a "brave or strong person" or an "influential or celebrated person." In Mandarin, on the other hand, such a person is called a "tiger," which is also the king of beasts in the Chinese culture. Some animal metaphors with Mandarin *hu3* 虎 "tiger" corresponding to English "lion" are given below:

1. Semantic Molecules: ANIMAL, DANGEROUS, VIOLENT
   Connotation: a danger or obstacle likely to be imaginary
   Mandarin: *lan2lu4hu3* 攔路虎 "block-way-tiger; a tiger blocking the way"
   English: a lion in the way/path
2. Semantic Molecules: ANIMAL, HEAD, DANGEROUS

Connotation: to confront someone on his/her own territory

Mandarin: *lao3hu3zui3shang4ba2mao2* 老虎嘴上拔毛 "tiger-mouth-pull-bear; to pull a tiger by its beard"

English: to beard the lion in his den

3. Semantic Molecules: ANIMAL, BIG, STRONG, POWERFUL

Connotation: to refer to the weaker one under the guise of the stronger one

Mandarin: *hu2jia3hu3wei1* 狐假虎威 "fox-guise-tiger-power; a fox under the guise of a tiger"

English: a donkey in a lion's hide; an ass in a lion's skin

4. Semantic Molecules: ANIMAL, FEEBLE, WEAK, POWERLESS

Connotation: A man losing position and influence may be subjected to much indignity.

Mandarin: *hu3luo4ping2yang2bei4quan3qi1* 虎落平陽被犬欺 "tiger-fall-level-land-passive-dog-bully; A tiger going down the level land may be bullied by dogs."

English: Hare may pull dead lions by the beard.

5. Semantic Molecules: ANIMAL, BODY, DANGEROUS

Connotation: not to insult or despise

Mandarin: *lao3hu3pi4gu3mo1bu4de2* 老虎屁股摸不得 "tiger-ass-touch-not-get; One should not touch the tiger's ass."

English: One should not twist the lion's tail.

6. Semantic Molecules: ANIMAL, ENERGETIC

Connotation: a fine start and poor finish

Mandarin: *hu3tou2she2wei3* 虎頭蛇尾 "tiger-head-snake-tail; to begin with tigerish energy but peter out towards the end"

English: in like a lion and out like a lamb

From the above idioms, we know that *hu3* 虎 "tiger" in Mandarin corresponds to "lion" in English, both of which are large, powerful, and flesh-eating animals of the cat family. They are also thought of as fierce and violent animals that are likely to attack. These two animals, however, are presented positively by Mandarin and English speakers. In Mandarin, there are many idioms containing *hu3* 虎 "tiger" that are used positively. For example, Mandarin speakers use *ru2hu3tian1yi4* 如虎添翼 "like-tiger-add-wing; like a tiger with wings" to refer to a strong person with added strength and *wo4hu3cang2long2* 臥虎藏龍 "crouch-tiger-hide-dragon; crouching tiger and hidden dragon" to describe a wealth of talents. In describing a steep terrain which is hard to climb on, *hu3ju4long2pan2* 虎踞龍盤 "tiger-occupy-dragon-settle; a place where tiger occupies and dragon settles in" is used. Mandarin speakers also use *long2teng2hu3yao4* 龍騰虎躍 "dragon-rise-

tiger-leap; dragons rise and tigers leap" to describe a scene of bustling activity. *Hu3* 虎 "tiger" alone is also used to describe a brave general, as in *hu3jiang4* 虎將 "tiger-general; a general as brave as a tiger," or the camp where the general stays, as in *hu3zhang4* 虎帳 "tiger-camp; general's camp." In a nutshell, *hu3* 虎 "tiger" in Mandarin is presented positively in many cases and is juxtaposed with *long2* 龍 "dragon," a divine animal in Chinese culture.[10]

In English, on the other hand, there are also many expressions that present "lion" in a positive way. This might be due to the fact that to the British and many Westerners, lions are the king of beasts. For example, people will be praised "as regal as a lion," "as majestic as a lion," or "as brave as a lion (or being lion-hearted)." A famous and important writer may also be called a "literary lion." In describing the largest or the best part of something that is divided, the "lion's share" is employed. Interestingly, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) once wrote a poem in 1819 called "The Mask of Anarchy," in which he described Manchester workers who faced government troops as "[rising] like lions after slumber."

So far, it is possible to build up the hypothesis that *hu3* 虎 "tiger" and "lion" are used by Mandarin and English speakers, respectively, to form idioms with the same connotation because these two animals live in different areas. More specifically, Chinese people in ancient times lived in mountainous areas where tigers were seen very often, as we can see from another idiom in Mandarin *shan1zhong1wu2lao3hu3, hou2zi5cheng1da4wang2* 山中無老虎，猴子稱大王 "mountain-center-without-tiger, monkey-call-big-king; When there is no tiger in the mountains, monkeys will be the king." Lions, on the other hand, are not indigenous animals of China. This is based on the observation that lion totems have never been found to appear in the utensils of the Shang Dynasty, nor has lion appeared in the oracle bone inscriptions (Wu 1984).

In fact, lions were from India. It is believed that when the Emperor Zhang of the Eastern Han reigned in 87 A.D., the King of Parthia (a small country in western regions) presented a lion to him as a tribute (Yu 2006). In addition, with the introduction of Buddhism into ancient China, the image of lion gradually appeared there, and the translation of Sanskrit Buddhist scriptures had an immense influence on the Chinese language, including the lexicon (Zhu 1992, 1993). For example, *shi1zi5hou3* 獅子吼 "lion-roar; lion's roar" is a metaphor in Buddhism which refers to the preaching of Buddha that shakes the world (Schafer 1963), and it is now broadly used to refer to the howls of a shrew.

---

[10]Although dragon has long been thought of as a vicious and evil animal in the Western culture, Chinese people regard *long2* 龍 "dragon" as an auspicious creature with the power to bless and influence their lives.

Huang (2007) also indicates that although more and more lions were brought into China since the Han Dynasty, most of them were kept in the royal courts and could not be seen by ordinary people. This is evidenced in sculptured stone lions in Chinese culture, which were first used to guard mausoleums and represented by craftsmen in an imaginative way – a hybrid between lions and tigers. This perhaps explains why in Mandarin there are not so many idioms containing lions, since just a few people had the opportunity to see lions and use these animals in their daily verbal interactions. It is also believed that the lions were first brought into England by Romans almost the same time when the lion was first brought into China. Not influenced by Buddhism, the British had chances to see lions, embedded them in idioms, and actually used these idioms in their daily verbal interactions.

While there are many expressions containing *hu3* 虎 "tiger" in Mandarin, there are just a few "tiger" expressions in English. The semantic structure of this animal species is simple in that most English speakers living in Australia, the U.S., and Britain do not have much to do with tigers (Goddard 1998, 246). Hsieh (2006, 2212) also points out that Europe lacks a native tiger species, and in German tiger is sometimes called *das asiatische Raubtier*, which means the "Asian beast of prey." Indeed, language is inseparable from culture, and culture is determined by geographical environment. It cannot be denied that natural environments including geographical positions, climates, ecological conditions, etc. play a contributory role in forming a culture, as well as the language of that culture. As a result, people's special way of living, thinking, and behaving is formed as a side-product of their relationship with the environment and has greatly influenced their use of the language.

3.2.2. The Same Animal Metaphor *Gou3* 狗 "Dog" with Different Connotations

Animals in different cultures or regions may be observed in different ways, and the attributes that are used most commonly may differ from one language to another. More specifically, people from different cultures may view the same animal differently. One of the many examples is the famous American rock-and-roll singer Elvis Presley's nickname in Mandarin: *mao1wang2* 貓王 "cat-king; king of cats." According to Hsieh (2006, 2213), Elvis's nickname in Mandarin is not understandable in many cultures. Although "cat" has many semantic molecules in world languages, with some overlapping, only the molecules of "animal, dancing" are used in Mandarin to describe Elvis's dance and longhair style. Besides cats, dogs can also be perceived and interpreted differently by those with different cultural backgrounds. For example, Mandarin and English speakers traditionally have different opinions towards dogs, as we can see below:

1. *Gou3* 狗 "Dog" in Mandarin

   (1) Positive: None

(2) Neutral: None

(3) Negative:

a. *lao3gou3* 老狗 “old-dog; an old dog, referring to a cunning guy”

b. *gou3guan1* 狗官 “dog-officer; a dog-like government official, referring to a bad or corrupted government official”

c. *gou3ji2tiao4qiang2* 狗急跳牆 “dog-haste-jump-wall; Despair gives courage to a coward.”

d. *gou3zhang4ren2shi4* 狗仗人勢 “dog-rely-human-force; A dog threatens other people on the strength of its master’s power.”

e. *ji1ming2gou3dao4* 雞鳴狗盜 “chicken-call-dog-steal; to pretend to be chicken and dog to steal”

f. *lang2xin1gou3fei4* 狼心狗肺 “wolf-heart-dog-lung; as rapacious as a wolf and savage as a cur”

g. *gou3tou2jun1shi1* 狗頭軍師 “dog-head-soldier-teacher; a dog-headed army advisor, referring to someone who is a good-for-nothing advisor”

h. *guo3xie3pen1tou2* 狗血噴頭 “dog-blood-spray-head; to spray one’s head with a dog’s blood, implying a torrent of abuse”

i. *gou3yan3kan4ren2du1* 狗眼看人低 “dog-eye-look-human-low; to look down upon people like a dog (damned snobbish)”

j. *gou3zui3tu3bu4chu1xiang4ya2* 狗嘴吐不出象牙 “dog-mouth-vomit-not-out-ivory; a dog’s mouth (filthy mouth) cannot utter ivory (decent language)”

k. *da3luo4shui3gou3* 打落水狗 “beat-drown-dog; to beat the drown dog, implying kicking the man when he is down”

l. *gou3gai3bu4liao3chi1shi3* 狗改不了吃屎 “dog-change-not-eat-shit; a dog cannot change the habit of eating shit, implying it is hard to mend one’s way”

2. “Dog” in English

(1) Positive:

a. Every dog has his/its day. (i.e., Everyone will get what he deserves.)

b. Love me, love my dog. (i.e., Accept my friend as yours.)

c. as faithful as a dog (i.e., very faithful)

d. top/upper/over dog (i.e., a dominant or victorious person)

e. big dog (i.e., an important, influential guy)

f. lucky dog (i.e., a lucky person)

g. gay dog (i.e., a happy person)

h. clever dog (i.e., a clever person)
i. old dog (i.e., an experienced person)
j. dog with two tails (i.e., someone who is extremely happy)
k. to help a lame dog over a stile (i.e., to help a person in trouble)
l. There is life in the old dog yet. (i.e., old, but healthy and strong)
m. A good dog deserves a good bone. (i.e., Kind people deserve to be rewarded.)
n. A living dog is better than a dead lion. (i.e., One should grasp what s/he has already got instead of daydreaming)

(2) Neutral:

a. dog's chance (i.e., less chance)
b. Barking dogs seldom bite. (i.e., Those who make loud threats seldom carry them out.)
c. He that wants to hang a dog is sure to find a rope. (i.e., to find fault with)
d. Give a dog a bad name and hang him. (i.e., to find fault with)
e. Let sleeping dogs lie. (i.e., Do not ask for trouble.)
f. as sick as a dog (i.e., very sick)
g. as clean as a hound's tooth (i.e., very clean)

(3). Negative:

a. dirty dog (i.e., a despicable person)
b. bottom/under dog[11] (i.e., a person of low status)
c. dog-eat-dog (i.e., ready to fight and hurt others to get what one wants)
d. to live/lead a dog's life (i.e., to lead a miserable life)
e. to go to the dogs (i.e., to deteriorate, to go to ruin)
f. to die like a dog (i.e., to die tragically)
g. to treat somebody like a dog (i.e., to treat somebody with no respect at all)
h. While the dogs growled at each other, the wolves devoured the sheep. (i.e., The third party benefits from the tussle.)
i. He that lies down with dogs must rise up with fleas. (i.e., One takes on the color of his/her company.)

From the above, we know that English speakers have a high opinion of dogs and regard them as faithful friends. Thus there are many canine idioms in English, most of which have a commendatory sense and are used to specify human beings. For example, dogs in English are used to describe a

[11]The metaphor "under dog" is now usually spelled as a single word "underdog."

lucky person (i.e., lucky dog), an important, influential guy (i.e., big dog), a happy person (i.e., gay dog or dog with two tails), etc. Mandarin speakers, on the other hand, often despise such an animal, and thus a dog is usually associated with a derogatory sense, as we can see in idioms like *gou3zhang4ren2shi4* 狗仗人勢, *lang2xin1gou3fei4* 狼心狗肺, *gou3yan3kan4ren2du1* 狗眼看人低, and so on. Interestingly, both Mandarin and English have expressions that are used to specify people as an old dog, as we can see from the above. Although *lao3gou3* 老狗 in Mandarin literally equals an "old dog" in English, their conversational implicature in both cultures is different. While *lao3gou3* 老狗 in Mandarin refers to a cunning guy, an "old dog" in English refers to an experienced person. Therefore, when one notices the difference, it would be easy for him/her to understand why Chinese people would at first feel insulted for being called an "old dog," even though this address form does not convey any negative meanings in English.

3.2.3. Animal Metaphors Reflect Gender Bias

As some animal metaphors are assigned masculinity and others are attached to femininity, animal metaphors reflect gender bias in world languages. Ochs's (1992) viewpoint suggests that gender ideologies can be socialized, supported, and transformed through talk, and in particular, through verbal practices that recur often in the lives of members of social groups. That is, what people say actually reflects what they think, and how they describe one thing in terms of another also represents the way they connect these two things. In Mandarin, for example, metaphors with *hu3* 虎 "tiger" are used to specify both women and men, but in completely different manners. This further reflects gender bias, as we can see in the following:

1. Metaphors with *Hu3* 虎 "Tiger" Specifying Women
   (1) *mu3lao3hu3* 母老虎 "female-tiger; a female tiger, referring to a termagant woman"
   (2) *hu3gu1po2* 虎姑婆 "tiger-aunt-grandmother; Tiger Granny, referring to an evil woman"
   (3) *bai2hu3xing1* 白虎星 "white-tiger-star; the White Tiger Star, referring to a woman who brings hard luck or jinx"
2. Metaphors with *Hu3* 虎 "Tiger" Specifying Men
   (1) *hu3jiang4* 虎將 "tiger-general; a general as brave as a tiger"
   (2) *hu3fu4wu2quan3zi3* 虎父無犬子 "tiger-father-without-dog-son; There will be no laggard among the children of a brave or talented man."

From the above, we can see that metaphors with *hu3* 虎 "tiger" in Mandarin can be used to specify both women and men, but these metaphors are used differently. While men are presented positively, as in *hu3jiang4* 虎將 and *hu3fu4wu2quan3zi3* 虎父無犬子, women are specified in

a negative way, as in *mu3lao3hu3* 母老虎, *hu3gu1po2* 虎姑婆, and *bai2hu3xing1* 白虎星. The semantic molecules applied to the above metaphors may include ANIMAL, POWERFUL, and VIOLENT, which are supposed to be men's characteristics, not women's. It is because in traditional Chinese culture influenced by the philosophy of Confucianism, a good Chinese woman should obey the Three Obediences and Four Virtues[12] and should not act like men. As Spender (1998, 17) observes, "[t]he word for women assumed negative connotations even where it designated the same state of condition as it did for men.... The only variable is that of sex and this variable is crucial to the semantic system." Indeed, words which are associated with women are likely to become pejorative. More specifically, words marked female are marked negative, which is what Schulz (1975) refers to as semantic derogation of women.[13]

Dog metaphors also exist in both cultures, and they are frequently used to specify women and men, as we can see below:

1. Dog Metaphors in Mandarin
   (1) Metaphors Specifying Women
      a. *mu3gou3* 母狗 "female-dog; a female dog, bitch"
   (2) Metaphors Specifying Men
      a. *xiao3lang2gou3* 小狼狗 "little-wolf-dog; a man kept by a rich woman"
      b. *hu3fu4wu2quan3zi3* 虎父無犬子 "tiger-father-without-dog-son; There will be no laggard among the children of a brave or talented man."
2. Dog Metaphors in English
   (1) Metaphors Specifying Women
      a. bitch (i.e., an address form used to insult women)
      b. son of bitch (i.e., an address form used to insult a guy)
   (2) Metaphors Specifying Men
      a. big dog (i.e., an important, influential guy)

As discussed in Section 3.2.2., although dogs are said to be faithful friends of human beings

---

[12]The Three Obediences require that a woman obey the father before marriage, obey the husband after marriage, and answer to the son after the death of her husband. The Four Virtues include attention to criteria that women have to meet to be "virtuous": morality, skill in handicrafts, appearance, and propriety in speech (Rubinstein 2004, 252).

[13]Also see Pauwels (2003) and Wareing (2004) for the semantic derogation of women. According to Wareing (2004, 80-82), the term "semantic derogation" can be defined as "[the] process of words which refer to women acquiring demeaning or sexual connotations," as in some English terms (e.g., gentleman or lord vs. lady; master vs. mistress; sir vs. madam; bachelor vs. spinster or old maid). Pauwels (2003, 567) also discusses this term from the feminist perspectives and indicates that as "women [are now] in the new roles or critical linguistic commentators, norm-breakers, and norm makers," the awareness of gender bias in language has been raised.

in both cultures, idioms or fixed expressions containing them in Mandarin never convey positive meanings, and therefore dogs are usually associated with a derogatory sense. Dogs when used to specify people in Mandarin, not surprisingly, are always negative. For example, *mu3gou3* 母狗 is used to insult a woman, and *xiao3lang2gou3* 小狼狗 is used to refer to a man kept by a rich woman like a toy boy. Even the idiom *hu3fu4wu2quan3zi3* 虎父無犬子 shows that someone described as a dog is a laggard. In English, on the other hand, dogs are used negatively to present women as in a "bitch," while they can present men positively as in a "big dog." Interestingly, while the expression "son of bitch" is used to indirectly attack the interlocutor (i.e., son, the male one), this expression directly insults the mother of the interlocutor (i.e., bitch, the female one). There is also a similar expression in Mandarin, *gou3yang3de* 狗養的 "dog-feed; someone kept by a dog." This expression does not reflect gender bias in that *gou3* 狗 "dog" in this expression may refer to the interlocutor's boss, as we can also see from another expression in Mandarin, *zou3gou3* 走狗 "walk-dog; a lackey, a servile follower," which is like the word "jackal" in English.

Bird metaphors are also used to specify women and men in both cultures and further reflect gender bias. In other words, bird metaphors are more frequently used to specify women in a negative manner, than to specify men. These metaphors are shown below:

1. Bird Metaphors in Mandarin
   (1) Metaphors Specifying Women
      a. *ji1* 雞 "chicken; a female prostitute"
      b. *ye3ji1* 野雞 "wild-chicken; a streetwalker"
      c. *ji1po2* 雞婆 "chicken-grandmother; to be a busybody"[14]
      d. *pin4ji1si1chen2* 牝雞司晨 "hen-[cry cock-a-doodle-doo]; a hen trying to cry cock-a- doo-dle-doo"
      e. *liu2ying1* 流鶯 "drift-canary; a streetwalker"
      f. *lao3bao3* 老鴇 "old-bustard; a woman running a brothel"
      g. *hai3ou1* 海鷗 "seagull; a woman frequently having sex with men"[15]
   (2) Metaphors Specifying Men
      a. *ya1* 鴨 "duck; a male prostitute"[16]
      b. *cai4niao3* 菜鳥 "vegetable-bird; a new prisoner, a newcomer"
2. Bird Metaphors in English

---

[14] *Ji1po2* 雞婆 in prison argot refers to a female drug addict.
[15] This metaphor is from prison discourse.
[16] *Niu2lang2* 牛郎 "cattle-man; a male prostitute" is another expression used to specify male sex workers.

(1) Metaphors Specifying Women

a. hen (i.e., a middle-aged woman who likes to make a fuss)

b. hen party (i.e., a party for women exclusively)

c. henpecked (i.e., a man continually nagged by his wife and completely obedient to her)

d. chick (i.e., a young woman)

e. pigeon (i.e., a woman or girl who is easy to be deceived)

(2) Metaphors Specifying Men: none

As we can see from the above, bird metaphors in Mandarin are frequently used to specify female sex workers or women who behave in a riotous, disorderly, and indecent manner. These metaphors are *ji1* 雞, *ye3ji1* 野雞, *liu2ying1* 流鶯, *lao3bao3* 老鴇, and *hai3ou1* 海鷗. However, there is only one found to specify male sex workers (i.e., *ya1* 鴨). The expression *pin4ji1si1chen2* 牝雞司晨 in Mandarin is also used to deride a husband whose wife is the head of the family. In English, women are also presented as birds, more specifically as hens. The party held for women exclusively is called a hen party, and a man continually nagged by his wife and completely obedient to her is described as being henpecked.

Interestingly, the way in which women are characterized as animals also reflects men's various perspectives towards them, as we can see below:

1. Animal Metaphors Specifying Women in Mandarin:

(1) *ma3zi5* 馬子 "horse-suffix; one's girlfriend"

(2) *zheng4ma3* 正馬 "square-horse; a beautiful woman"

(3) *diao4ma3zi5* 釣馬子 "hook-horse-suffix; to deceive a woman"

(4) *hu2li2jing1* 狐狸精 "fox-spirit; a seductive woman"

(5) *xiao3ye3mao1* 小野貓 "little-wild-cat; a pussycat, referring to a sexy woman"

(6) *he2dong1shi1hou3* 河東獅吼 "river-east-lion-roar; a jealous wife who howls at her husband"

(7) *she2xie1mei3ren2* 蛇蠍美人 "snake-scorpion-beauty; a beautiful but ruthless woman"

2. Animal Metaphors Specifying Women in English:

(1) bat (i.e., a female prostitute)

(2) alley cat (i.e., a female streetwalker)

(3) cathouse (i.e., a brothel)

(4) sex-kitten (i.e., a sexy woman)

(5) puss (i.e., a little woman or little girl)

(6) shrew (i.e., a bad-tempered, vicious woman)

(7) cow (i.e., a sloppy, fat woman)

(8) filly (i.e., an active little woman)

(9) fox (i.e., a tempting woman)

(10) vixen (i.e., a bad-tempered woman)

(11) bunny (i.e., a tempting woman)

(12) bunny girl (i.e., a women's image from the Playboy magazine)

From the above, we know that women are frequently depicted as cats in both cultures. In Mandarin, for example, a sexy, beautiful woman may be called *xiao3ye3mao1* 小野貓. In English, on the other hand, a "sex-kitten" is used for the same semantic meaning. A female streetwalker may be referred to as an "alley cat," and a brothel may be called a "cathouse." In addition, the pronoun "she" is often used to refer to a cat, even when its sex is unknown. As Goddard (1998, 250) concludes, "[t]he association between cats and 'femininity,' in my view, tells us as much (or more) about traditional attitudes towards women as it does about cats." The cat metaphors and other metaphors listed above show how women are viewed. Indeed, women in people's eyes (perhaps in men's eyes only) can be categorized as different groups of animals. As observed by Whaley and Antonelli (1983), women are frequently depicted as animals, more specifically as pets (e.g., sex-kitten), pests (e.g., bitch), cattle (e.g., cow), and wild animals (e.g., bunnies and foxes).

While animal metaphors used to specify women are often concerned with women's outward looks or their attraction to men, such as sexiness, those used to specify men are often concerned with men's manhood and how they are attracted to women. Some of these metaphors are shown below:

1. Animal Metaphors Specifying Men in Mandarin:

(1) *zhu1ge1* 豬哥 "pig-elder brother; to be lustful"

(2) *ai3luo2zi5* 矮騾子 "short-mule; a hooligan"

2. Animal Metaphors Specifying Men in English:

(1) bull session (i.e., men's talk)

(2) stag (i.e., a man who goes to a social gathering alone)

(3) stag party (i.e., a party for men exclusively)

(4) calf (i.e., a young man, dumb guy)

(5) ox (i.e., a dumb guy)

(6) goat (i.e., a lustful man)

(7) stud, studhorse (i.e., a manly man)

(8) wolf calling/whistling (i.e., men greeting or complimenting women)

The above metaphors show that in English men are often described as embodying characteristics of the bull, stag, calf, ox, or studhorse. All these animals are strong and are therefore connected to

men's manhood. It is also interesting to note that some of the above metaphors are used to describe how men are attracted to women. In Mandarin, for example, an amorist may be called *zhu1ge1* 豬哥. In English, a lustful man is described as a goat, and the act that men greeting or complimenting women is wolf calling or wolf whistling.

4. Conclusion

In Section 3.1., we have observed that animal terms in Mandarin and English can be used as denominal verbs. While some verbs containing animal species are used without any prejudice against animals, most of them put animals in a negative manner (e.g., *zhu1ge1* 豬哥 in Mandarin vs. "*pig* at the dinner-table" in English).

Animal metaphors also reflect the cultural heritage. For instance, English animal metaphors come from the Bible, Greek mythology, and Western literary works (e.g., Aesop's Fables, Shakespeare's opera, etc.). On the other hand, most animal metaphors in Mandarin come from the Chinese folk stories, myth, and legends. Even though both languages are culture-specific, there are still some pairs of idioms, phrases, or expressions that apply analogous strategies to create similar figurative readings that employ different animal metaphors as their sources (e.g., *niu2* 牛 "cattle" in Mandarin vs. "horse" in English; *hu3* 虎 "tiger" in Mandarin vs. "lion" in English), as illustrated in Section 3.2.1.

Our findings also show that people from different cultures may view the same animal differently. As we have discussed in Section 3.2.2., while English speakers have a high opinion of dogs, Mandarin speakers despise such animals. This is further reflected in the idioms in the two languages (e.g., Mandarin *lao3gou3* 老狗 vs. English "old dog").

We have also observed that animal metaphors may reflect gender bias. From our discussion in Section 3.2.3., we have good grounds for thinking that metaphorical animal terms or expressions for human beings, especially for women, are often insulting or belittling (e.g., *mu3gou3* 母狗 in Mandarin vs. "bitch" in English). Even the same animal used to specify women and men is viewed differently (e.g., *mu3lao3hu3* 母老虎 vs. *hu3jiang4* 虎將 in Mandarin).

As pointed out by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), how we think or act is basically metaphorical in nature. For the ease of understanding, we use animal metaphors to characterize human beings, as well as nonhuman entities, in terms of animal characteristics and activities. In a nutshell, we can say with fair certainty that animal metaphors embedded in phrases, idioms, slang, proverbs, allusions, habitual collocations, and so on reflect not only the cultural heritage, but also the grammar. The

grammar further reflects people's perspectives towards animals.

Finally, we hope our study of animal metaphors in English and Mandarin can help English-speaking learners of Mandarin to make their learning smoother. Deignan, Gabryś, and Solska (1997) explore the pedagogical use of metaphor awareness to facilitate foreign language learning. Low (1988) argues for the important role of metaphor in language teaching, and the "metaphoric competence" should be developed by students. They believe that students can achieve more if they are taught to use conceptual metaphors consciously. We are sure that studying cross-cultural patterns in animal metaphors can provide invaluable insights into how the mind works.

Acknowledgements

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2nd International Conference on Language and Communication: Dynamism of Language and Communication in Society, Bangkok, Thailand, August 5-6, 2010. We appreciate comments from the participants at the conference and also wish to thank the anonymous reviewers for their constructive suggestions. Their comments and suggestions have been well taken in revising this paper for publication. All honors belong to them, and all errors are our own responsibility.

References

Clark, Eve V. and Herbert H. Clark. "When Nouns Surface as Verbs," *Language,* 55.4 (1979): 767-811.

Deignan, Alice. *Metaphor and Corpus Linguistics* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005).

Deignan, Alice, Danuta Gabryś, and Agnieszka Solska. "Teaching English Metaphors Using Cross-Linguistic Awareness-Raising Activities," *ELT Journal,* 51.4 (1997): 352-260.

Dowker, Ann. "Young Children's and Adults' Use of Figurative Language: How Important Are Cultural and Linguistic Influences?" in *Polysemy: Flexible Patterns of Meaning in Mind and Language*, eds. Brigitte Nerlich et al. (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003), 317-332.

Fei, Jia. "Metaphor and Cross-Cultural Communication," *US-China Foreign Language,* 3.5 (2005): 29-32.

Fontecha, Almudena Fernández and Rosa María Jiménez Catalán. "Semantic Derogation in Animal Metaphor: A Contrastive-Cognitive Analysis of Two Male/Female Examples in English and Spanish," *Journal of Pragmatics,* 35 (2003): 771-797.

Garrison, Jeff and Masahiko Goshi. *Animal Idioms* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1996).

Goatly, Andrew. *The Language of Metaphors* (London: Routledge, 1997).

Goddard, Cliff. *Semantic Analysis: A Practical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Grice, Herbert Paul. "Logic and Conversation," in *Syntax and Semantics Vol. 3: Speech Acts*, eds. Cole, Peter and Jerry L. Morgan (New York: Academic Press, 1975), 41-58.

Halupka-Rešetar, Sabina and Biljana Radić. "Animal Names Used in Addressing People in Serbian," *Journal of Pragmatics,* 35 (2003): 1891-1902.

Hopper, Paul J. and Sandra A. Thompson. "The Discourse Basis for Lexical Categories in Universal Grammar," *Language,* 60 (1984): 703-752.

Hsieh, Shelley Ching-Yu. "A Corpus-Based Study on Animal Expressions in Mandarin Chinese and German," *Journal of Pragmatics,* 38 (2006): 2206-2222.

Huang, Hui-Wen. "A Preliminary Study of the Evolution in the Artistic Styles of Stone Lions in Taiwan before 1945" (M.A. thesis, National Cheng Kung University, 2007).

Kövecses, Zoltán. *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Kövecses, Zoltán. "Language, Figurative Thought, and Cross-Cultural Comparison," *Metaphor and Symbol,* 18.4 (2003): 311-320.

Kuo, Sai-Hua. "You're a Little Rabbit in a Pack of Foxes: Animal Metaphors in Chinese Political Discourse," *Journal of Chinese Linguistics,* 31.1 (2003): 72-100.

Lakoff, George. "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor," in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 202-251.

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980).

Lakoff, George and Mark Turner. *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).

Littlemore, Jeannette. "The Use of Metaphor in University Lectures and the Problems That It Causes for Overseas Students," *Teaching in Higher Education,* 6 (2001): 333-351.

Littlemore, Jeannette. "The Effect of Cultural Background on Metaphor Interpretation," *Metaphor and Symbol,* 18.4 (2003): 273-288.

Low, Graham D. "On Teaching Metaphor," *Applied Linguistics,* 9.2 (1988): 125-147.

Lyman, Darryl. *The Animal Things We Say* (Middle Village, New Hersey: Jonathan David, 1983).

Martsa, Sándor. "On Exploring the Conceptual Structure of Folk Knowledge: The Case of Animal Terms," *Linguistica e Filologia,* 9 (1999): 73-87.

Morgan, Jerry L. "Two Types of Convention in Indirect Speech Acts," in *Syntax and Semantics Vol. 9: Pragmatics*, ed. Peter Cole (New York: Academic Press, 1978), 261-280.

Ochs, Elinor. "Indexing Gender," in *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*, eds. Duranti, Alessandro and Charles Goodwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 335-358.

Pauwels, Anne. "Linguistic Sexism and Feminist Linguistic Activism," in *The Handbook of Language and Gender*, eds. Holmes, Janet and Miriam Meyerhoff (Malden: Blackwell, 2003), 550-554.

Rubinstein, Murray. "Lu Hsiu-Lien and the Origins of Taiwanese Feminism, 1944-1977," in *Women in the New Taiwan: Gender Roles and Gender Consciousness in a Changing Society*, eds. Farris, Catherine, Anru Lee, and Murray Rubinstein (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 244-277.

Schafer, Edward H. *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1963).

Schulz, Muriel. "The Semantic Derogation of Women," in *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance*, eds. Thorne, Barrie and Nancy Henley (Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House, 1975), 64-75.

Si, Xianzhu. "Yinghan Mingzhuan Dongci Bijiao Yanjiu (A Comparative Study of Denominal Verbs

in English and Chinese)," *Foreign Languages,* 3 (1996): 54-58.

Spender, Dale. *Man Made Language* (London: Pandora Press, 1998).

Tai, James Hao-Yi. "Category Shifts and Word Formation Redundancy Rules in Chinese," in *Chinese Language and Linguistics III: Morphology and Lexicon, Symposium Series of the Institute of History and Philology, No.2*, eds. Tsao, Feng-Fu and Hsu Samuel Wang (Taipei, Taiwan: Academia Sinica, 1997), 435-468.

Talebinejad, M. Reza and H. Vahid Dastjerdi. "A Cross-Cultural Study of Animal Metaphors: When Owls Are Not Wise!" *Metaphor and Symbol,* 20.2 (2005): 133-150.

The Commercial Press. *Hanyu Da Cidian (The Great Dictionary of the Chinese Language): CD Rom Traditional Chinese Version 3.0* (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2007).

Wang, Chongying and Ann Dowker. "Interpretation of Animal Metaphors: Evidence from Chinese and English Children and Adults," in *Proceedings of the 2007 Child Language Seminar 30th Anniversary*, eds. Marinis, Theodoros, Angeliki Papangeli, and Vesna Stojanovik (Reading, Berkshire: University of Reading, 2008), 216-224.

Wang, Dong-Mei. "Nominalization and Verbalization in Contemporary Chinese: A Cognitive Linguistic Inquiry" (Ph.D. diss., Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 2001).

Wareing, Shân. "Language and Gender," in *Language, Society and Power: An Introduction*, ed. Linda Thomas (New York: Routledge, 2004), 76-92.

Whaley, Robert C. and George Antonelli. "The Birds and the Beasts: Woman as Animal," *Maledicta,* 7 (1983): 219-229.

Wierzbicka, Anna. *Lexicography and Conceptual Analysis* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Karoma, 1985).

Wu, Teng-Ta. "Shizide Youlai (The Origin of Lions)," in *Taiwan Minjian Wushi Zhi Yanjiu (On Taiwanese Folk Art: Lion Dance)*, ed. Teng-Ta Wu (Taipei, Taiwan: Dali, 1984), 7.

Yu, I-Ching. "The Research on Lion Design in Chinese Decorative Art" (M.A. thesis, National Taiwan University of Arts, 2006).

Zhang, Wei-Lin. *Cong Dongzhiwu Xue Yingyu (Learning English through Animals and Plants)* (Taipei, Taiwan: Ivy Publishing Company, 2003).

Zhou, Lingshun. "Yinhan Zhuanxingcide Lilun Wenti (The Theoretical Issue on the Converted Words in English and Chinese)," *Foreign Languages and Their Teaching,* 8 (2000): 15-17.

Zhu, Qing-Zhi. "Shilun Fodian Fanyi Dui Zhonggu Hanyu Cihui Fazhande Luogan Yingxiang (A Trial Investigation of Some Influences of the Translation of Buddhist Scriptures on the Development of Middle Chinese Lexicon)," *Zhongguo Yuwen,* 4 (1992): 297-305.

Zhu, Qing-Zhi. "Han Yi Fodian Yuwenzhongde Yuandian Yingxiang Chutan (An Initial Study

on the Influence of Original Scriptures on the Language of the Chinese Translated Buddhist Scriptures),” *Zhongguo Yuwen,* 5 (1993): 379-385.

動物洩露了語法及文化的什麼祕密：中英文動物譬喻詞之研究

陳淑芬
中國文學系
國立清華大學
副教授

陳力綺
英語學系
國立臺南大學
兼任講師

摘要

本文旨在探討中英文動物譬喻詞的使用方式，理論架構採用「物種關係鏈譬喻」，並應用「語意分子」的分析方式。我們的研究結果如下：一、中英文的動物詞皆可轉化成動詞使用。英文的此類動詞可同時具及物性（例：*fox* the people）及不及物性（例：*chicken* out of a fight）；對比之下，中文的名詞動化（去名詞性動詞）較少，且多為狀態動詞，常常和人際關係詞（例：雞婆）或身體部位詞（例：豬頭）並列使用。二、動物譬喻詞可反映出文化特色，且不同文化的不同動物譬喻詞可彼此對應。例如，中文跟「牛」有關的動物譬喻詞常常可對應到英文跟「horse」有關的動物譬喻詞（例：中文的「力大如牛」等同英文的「as strong as a horse」）。此外，中文跟「虎」有關的動物譬喻詞也常常對應到英文跟「lion」有關的動物譬喻詞，且多以正面呈現（例：中文的「虎將」及英文的「as regal as a lion」皆有正面之意）。三、不同文化背景的人士對動物也會持不同的看法。例如，以英語為母語的人士對狗有比較高的評價，但以中文為母語的人士則持負面評價較多（例：英文的「old dog」可用來正面呈現一個有經驗的人，但直譯成中文則含有奸詐、狡猾之意）。綜合上述的結果，可以清楚地看出動物譬喻詞具有文化殊異性，因此不同文化背景的人士會用不同的方式來理解動物譬喻詞。

關鍵詞：動物譬喻詞、名詞動化（去名詞性動詞）、性別偏見、語意貶抑、語意分子