

A Study on the Metaphor Translation of *Poems of Mao Zedong*

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ABSTRACT

Metaphors abound in Mao Zedong's poems. The frequent and substantive metaphors play an important role in expressing the theme of the poetry. Cognitive blending theory has great cognitive effects on metaphor translation. In the perspective of cognitive linguistics, the study on *Poems of Mao Zedong* lacks a systematic framework for the moment. And it is of great significance to work on its translation strategies, which to rich future translation studies. This thesis tries to combine the metaphor translation in *Poems of Mao Zedong* with conceptual blending theory and explores the effective techniques in metaphor translation.

Keywords: *Mao Zedong's poems, Metaphor, Cognitive blending theory.*

1. INTRODUCTION

During the development and maturing stage of cognitive linguistics, it subsumes a number of distinct theories and celebrated names, such as the studies on metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), mental space theory (Fauconnier, 1985), Langacker's cognitive grammar (Langacker, 1991), construction grammar (Glodberg, 1995), and Croft and Cruse (Croft & Cruse, 2004) give a rough definition of paradigm with three major hypotheses that the cognitive linguistic approach to language, and so on. Within cognitive linguistic theories, conceptual metaphor theory and conceptual blending theory have proposed new ways of researching the processes of meaning construction.

The conceptual blending theory, also known as conceptual integration theory, which proposed by Fauconnier and Turner based on Lakoff's conceptual metaphor theory. Fauconnier's theory is a further development of metaphor. Structure mapping and metaphorical projection play a central role in the construction of reasoning and meaning. In blending, structure from input mental spaces is projected to a separate, "blended" mental space. The project is selective. The ideas developed in the blend can have effect in cognition. "Blending operates according to a set of uniform structural and dynamic principles. It additionally observes a

set of optimality principles." (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998, p.133)

Conceptual blending theory not only can apply to the meaning construction of natural language, but also apply to metaphor. "Blended space plays a key role in metaphorical mappings that is in addition to the familiar source and target of metaphorical projection, blends are constructed in which important cognitive works gets accomplished." (Fauconnier, 1997, p.168) The contemporary view of the studies on metaphor and metaphor translation are mainly reflected in the field of cognitive linguistics. In the second chapter, the thesis mentions that Lakoff argues the process of understanding of metaphor is cognitive. Then the process of translating source text to its corresponding expressions in target language is also cognitive process. It is well know that to understand the meaning of the source text conveyed by the source language is the first task for translation. But, seldom have we had functional equivalent transcripts in the translation of metaphor. On the basis of conceptual blending theory, this thesis strives to analyze the changes occur in the metaphorical concept system during the bilingual transition and aim to explore the mechanism of translation of metaphor.

2. STUDIES ON METAPHOR TRANSLATION

“Metaphor, or the means by which one thing is described in terms of something else, has been described as a central tool of our cognitive apparatus. It is central to our understanding of how language, thought, and discourse are structured.” (Long & Richards, 1999, p.x) Metaphor as a phenomenon of language in use has a long history. Traditionally, metaphor, different from simile which is a comparison marked by the words as the follow “like”, “as”, “as if” or “as though”, is used to achieve artistic and rhetorical effects. Therefore, metaphor is regarded as a figure of speech. Metaphor is an important research topic that has drawn scholastic pursuit since remote antiquity. “Study on metaphor before the 20th century is usually called the classical period of metaphor study.” (Yan, 2000, p.13) Over the past thousands of years, particularly from the second half of the twentieth century, various schools of theory have emerged and blossomed. These schools attempt to stipulate the guiding principles of metaphorical identification and interpretation. Modern views of metaphor are the cognitive linguistic views, which are the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) and the conceptual blending theory (CBT).

I. A. Richards is the first modern author who unambiguously argues for the conceptualist research vein for metaphor. As Richards concerns, linguistic metaphors are really reflected by some mundane things. “Thought is metaphorical, and proceeds by comparison, and the metaphors of language derive there from.” (Richards, 1967, p.94) During the long period of research of metaphor, the real breakthrough is made by the cognitivists. A significant landmark is the publication of *Metaphors We Live By* written by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980. They propose that metaphor is universal in everyday life and indicate that metaphor should be understood as ‘metaphorical concept’. “The way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor.” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.3)

Lakoff and Johnson make the distinction between conceptual metaphors and linguistic metaphors. Linguistic metaphors are merely surface manifestations of conceptual metaphors. While, conceptual metaphors function to produce linguistic metaphors. And conceptual metaphors include structural metaphors, orientational metaphors and ontological metaphors. Lakoff and Johnson lay emphasis on the study of conventional metaphors. This metaphor system plays an important role in both lexicon and grammar of language. Even poetic metaphor is an extension of the conventional metaphor system. The poetic metaphor is generated by the same rules of mapping. Conceptual blending theory is the further development in cognitive linguistics. Projection connects frames to specific situations, to related frames, and to conventional scenes. The basis for this theory is that “conceptual integration-like framing or categorization-is a basic cognitive operation that operates uniformly at different levels of abstraction and under superficially divergent contextual circumstances.” (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998, p.189)

Metaphor translation is a very complicated job because it not only concerns both the source language and the target language, but also in the process of translation how expresses the initial nature of the metaphor from the source to the target.

Metaphor translation can be described as a mental process of embodied mind. So the cognitive linguistics view of metaphor translation is the process “from reality to cognition and then to language.” (Wang, 2007, p.583) Wang advocates that metaphor translation is a cognitive activity and the multi-activities of the cognitive participants are the basis of translation. The real experience is the background of metaphor translation process. At the same time, the thinking, cognizing and comprehending activities of author, reader, and translator should be concerned. Wang depicts the cognitive model of translation showed in this “Figure 1”.

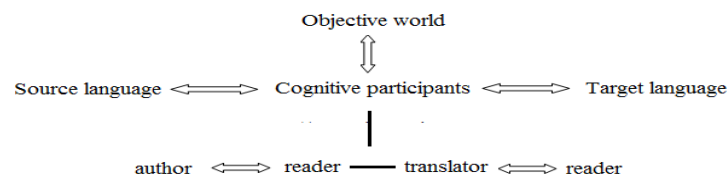


Figure 1 Cognitive model of translation.

From the perspective of cognitive linguistics view of translation, the experiential cognition plays an important role for translatability among different languages. Because people share the same objective world and possess generally similar thoughts, translators can project and reveal the meanings of the source text to the target one. These meanings are the result from the depiction of the objective world and the cognitive world. Taking into consideration about the factors of author, translator and reader in the process of translation, this whole model ensures the harmony and appropriateness in translation.

3. STUDIES ON POEMS OF MAO ZEDONG

Mao Zedong, as an outstanding statesman, his unique status is not only in his remarkable revolutionary accomplishments but also in his prominent literary achievements. Mao as a poet he writes in a tradition of thousands of years. However, he does distinguish him from those ancestors. He is good at describing modern poetry – the free verse – through traditional and classical style. *Poems of Mao Zedong* is a kind of special, vital research subject in the field of Chinese literature academy.

The multiple identities of Mao Zedong make his poems distinct from those of other poets. He has the ability to perceive the integration of military affairs, politics, arts, history and allusion. Few of other poets, even the accomplished ones can do like this. Zang Kejia once said: “Mao Zedong’s poetry is always an endless topic”. The people around the world are infected by the high spirits and optimistic sentiments from his poetry. In *Poems of Mao Zedong*, his expressions on ideal and practice, form and content, romance and reality, personal feelings and the grand like an epic are in well blending. Since the 1940s, Mao Zedong’s *Poems* have been started to translate into a number of foreign languages such as English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian language with unprecedented popularity.

So far as the English versions are concerned, there are several dozens in number. The earliest version in China was poems of Mao Zedong, comprising 18 poems carried in *Poetry* edited by Zang Kejia. Closely following this was *Nineteen Poems* published by Foreign Languages Press in 1958. In 1965, *Mao and the Chinese Revolution: with Thirty-Seven Poems* by Mao Tse-tung published by Oxford University Press. The translated poems are the second part of

the book, because the aim of it is to enhance the interesting of the readers and improve readers’ literary accomplishments as well. Among the English versions of Mao Zedong’s poems, *Mao Tsetung Poems* published by Foreign Languages Press in 1976 carried weight in all of them. This version is the co-translation of prominent scholars so it is also called the official version. In 1980, *Poems of Mao Zedong* was translated by Zhao Zhentao and published by Hunan People’s Publishing House. As Mao Zedong’s centennial anniversary fell in 1993, three English editions of Mao Zedong’s poems came into being: one was *Poems of Mao Zedong with Rhymed Versions and Annotations* by Gu Zhengkun, another one was *Selected Poems of Mao Zedong* by Xu Yuanchong, still another was an English version of *Mao Zedong’s Poems* by Huang Long. Gu Zhengkun’s version and Xu Yuanchong’s version enjoyed their popularity through years.

The initial English version overseas was mentioned previously, *Mao and the Chinese Revolution: with Thirty-Seven Poems* by Mao Tse-tung, and translated by Michael Bullock and Jerome Ch’en in the year of 1965. In 1972, a good quality translated version -- *Poems of Mao Tse-tung*, a co-translation by Hua-ling Nieh, a Chinese-American researcher and Pau Engle, published by Simon and Schuster in 1972. This version had gained the highest prestige. In the same year, *The Poems of Mao Tse-tung* translated by Wills Barnstone and published by Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc. Till now, the previous mentioned versions translated by the translators from home and abroad are the main English versions. And, they are still the part of the whole existed translated versions. However, this can evidently demonstrates *Poems of Mao Zedong’s* remarkable position in the poetic world.

4. METAPHORS TRANSLATION EMBODIED IN POEMS OF MAO ZEDONG

“Concerning metaphor translation, it is quite important to realize the role of conceptualization in identifying or creating similarities.” (Tan, 2009, p.125) Metaphors are essentially abstract. This section will mainly talk about the metaphors in each translated version and analyze how metaphors are used in *Poems of Mao Zedong* with conceptual blending theory as its theoretical basis.

Metaphorical expressions are abundant and pervasive in Mao’s poetry. For example, metaphors

at word level: the tide of heart “心潮”, top of the mountain “山头”, heaven’s armies “天兵”, a forest of rifles “枪林”, and so on. Metaphors at phrase level are exemplified as: a sudden burst of wind and rain “风云突变”, dawn tinges the eastern skies “东方欲晓”, mountains like silver serpents dancing “山舞银蛇”, highlands like waxy elephants advancing “原驰蜡象” et cetera. Sentential metaphors are omnipresent in Mao’s poetry. They respectively are: over the Bell mountain a tremendous storm sweeps headlong “钟山风雨起苍黄”, rolling back the enemy as we would a mat “横扫千军如卷席”, the Four Seas are rising, clouds and waters raging “四海翻腾云水怒” et cetera. In Poems of Mao Zedong, there is also metaphor at the discourse level, which means the whole text is a metaphor, such as the poem Reply to Comrade Guo Moruo (“七律 和郭沫若同志”). Although this research is involved all the forms of metaphor, sentential metaphor is the focus.

“Conceptual blending” is a series of cognitive activities, which people selectively extract partial meaning and blend them from the inputs information of different spaces. Any formation of the concept must go through the process of blending information by mental space. Chapter three makes a detailed introduction to the conceptual blending theory. In this section,

Table 1. Conceptual blending network: “龟蛇锁大江”

Generic Space	Shape, appearance	
Input Space 1	The animal tortoise and snake	
Input Space 2	The Mountain Tortoise and the Mountain Snake	
Blended Space	participants	the mountain Tortoise and the Mountain Snake the animal of tortoise and the snake
	relationship	“snake and tortoise” like a chain surround and hold something
	The mountain Snake zigzags like a snake	
	obstacles blocked the path of revolutionary	
Emergent Structure	the Yangzi River is bound by the two mountains; obstacles and difficulties in the course of advance	

In this poem, the description of the two mountains stand facing each other and hold the Yangzi River literally which implies that the raging tide of revolution surges forward. The metaphor results from the blend which contains the two input spaces: the source space of the animal tortoise and snake and the target space of the Mountain Tortoise as well the Mountain Snake. The input space 1 provides the organizing frame to the blend; while input space 2 is the focus of understanding. There are partial cross-space mapping of counterpart connections between input spaces. The appearances of snake and tortoise are used to name the

conceptual blending theory will be applied to the analysis of interpretation of metaphors and showed how the meaning of metaphors is blended in *Pomes of Mao Zedong*.

Sample 1: 烟雨莽苍苍，龟蛇锁大江。（“菩萨蛮 黄鹤楼”）

This poem is written in the year of 1927, in this period, Chiang Kai-shek launched a devastating attack upon the Chinese communists. However, Chen Duxiu instead of staging a counterattack against Chiang, insisted on making concession to Kuomintang and give up the Party’s leadership over the revolution. Mao Zedong’s proposals about this issue were ignored and he was actually excluded outside the Party leadership. When Mao Zedong boarded and overlooked the Yellow Crane Tower, he expressed his feelings and thoughts.

In sample 1, the Mountain Tortoise and the Mountain Snake are metaphorically refer to ‘Tortoise’ and ‘Snake’. Both the two Mountains look like tortoise and snake in their shapes, and located opposite to each other. Between them is the Yangzi River, which seems that the river is surrounded by the two Mountains in chain. The four spaces in blending network can give the intuitive explanation in the following “Table 1”.

mountains. Both of them show the similar characteristics of encirclement.

In the generic space which maps onto both input spaces reflects the common structures shared by the two inputs: both spaces contain the information that the same shape and appearance in each input space.

Structure from two input mental spaces is projected to the blend. Blending composes elements and relations from the two inputs. The Yangzi River flows between the two Mountains can be inferred the implied message that revolution is like a huge vessel under the rule of erroneous ideas,

which may lead the dangerous of revolution strike on the rock. No matter what kind of difficulties the Communist Party meets with, the revolutionary enthusiasm wouldn't extinguish. The emergent structure through composition, completion and elaboration is brought out. The current situation is tense, obstacles and difficulties in the course of advance, but the revolutionaries always maintain a positive mental outlook.

Sample 2: 六月天兵征腐恶，万丈长缨要把鲲鹏缚。
 (“蝶恋花 从汀州向长沙”)

On June 22, 1930, the First Red Army Group stationed in Tingzhou ordered the troops in the west of Jiangxi to advance in the direction of Huichang. The poem was chanted during the Red Army's march from Tingzhou to Changsha. The poet referred to the Red Army as “heavenly troops”, to the Kuomintang troops as “evil lords”, and to the revolution as “a furious storm”. (“Table 2”)

Table 2. Conceptual blending network: “六月天兵征腐恶”

Generic Space	The evil part is defeated by the army fighting for a just cause; good prevails over evil; to solve the problem with military operations.	
Input Space 1	In ancient times, emperors and kings in Chinese history called their armies “God-sent armies”. The evil and corrupt should be cleared out.	
Input Space 2	The Red Army is much like the “God –sent armies” to satisfy the interests and demands of the people and vanquish evil. The enemy is doomed to failure.	
Blended Space	participants	the evil; Kuomintang chiefs; guilty of terrible crimes
		the Red Army; justice
	relationship	he who is unjust is doomed to destruction;
		face the enemy down;
	the reactionaries must be punished; suffer of tortures at the hands of the Kuomintang reactionaries;	
	the Red Army mounts a counterattack	
Emergent Structure	The Kuomintang's reactionary rule should be criticized; the new society comes from the forge of hard and bitter struggle; the Red Army is considered as “God-sent armies”, which implies that the final victory is in sight. The Red Army dedicated to a just cause.	

In this poem, the poetical images are so grand. Mao comes straight to the point that uses the image of “God-sent armies” to make an analogy. The Red Army is taken metaphorically as the side with justice. In contrast, the enemy is taken as “the corrupt and evil”, despised as they deserved to be. “征” and “缚” mean that the Red Army is of great vitality and strength. Though roc and whale (Kuomintang) stand for Peng and Kun respectively, the magnificent appearance, are hard to deal with, the Red Army will crowd with victory. In this part, the metaphorical expression of “God-sent armies” and “the corrupt and evil” will be analyzed based on the conceptual blending theory as a sample.

In the generic space which projects to both input spaces reflects the common structures shared by the two inputs: relationships between “God-sent armies” and the Red Army” as well as “the corrupt and evil” and Kuomintang respectively. The generic space defines the current cross-space mapping between them. The paired counterparts from the two input spaces are mapped in it.

By partial projection and cross-space mapping, blending composes elements which do not exist entirely in the separate inputs. The emergent structure through composition, completion and elaboration is brought out. With background knowledge about “God-sent armies” and the Red Army, a scenario could be showed in one's mind: “God-sent armies stand for justice and fight for the evil. The war should be taken as the behavior following the popular will. People's army takes the win is the general trend of development and the common aspiration of the people. The Kuomintang's reactionary is doomed to destruction.

Elaboration develops the blend through imaginative mental simulation in the blend. Through elaboration process in blended space we could infer the implied message that prevailing over evil is a difficult task. The evils' strength and power is also described in an allusion – roc and whale. Roc and whale refer to Peng and Kun respectively, which is understood as a compromise of the original, symbolizing Kuomintang, headed

by Chiang Kai-shek. Although they exist, the last hours of them are numbered.

Sample 3: 五岭逶迤腾细浪，乌蒙磅礴走泥丸。
 (“七律 长征”)

With the failure of thwarting Chiang Kai-shek’s fifth “encirclement and suppression” campaign, the central Red Army started from Jiangxi and Fujian Province on the long march in October 1934. It advanced westward along the five Ridges extending over Jiangxi, Guangdong, Hunan and Guangxi Provinces. In January 1935 it passed by the twelve

peaks of Wumeng Mountains in Yunnan Province. Then it turned to the north, crossed the River of Golden Sand in May and River Dadu spanned by an iron-chain bridge in Sichuan Province. In September it crossed the perpetually snow-capped Min Mountains and trackless grasslands and finally arrived at the revolutionary base area in northern Shanxi in October. During the Long March, the Red Army broke through four rings of blockade. The Red Army found itself in danger time and it suffered heavy casualties until only less than fifty percent of its men remained. (“Table 3”)

Table 3. Conceptual blending network: “五岭逶迤腾细浪，乌蒙磅礴走泥丸”

Generic Space	The appearance of the continuous range of mountains is just like the continuous waves. The material makes of Wumeng mountain is just like the mud ball.	
Input Space 1	a continuous range of mountains; Five ridges; the shape of a chain of mountains looks like zigzag. Wumeng is the name of a mountain; a stern strong appearance of Wumeng mountain;	
Input Space 2	The wild tide; the motion of the waves; mud balls; globules of clay;	
Blended Space	participants	Five ridges; Wumeng mountain the waves, tide; mud ball.
	relationship	The continuous range of mountains is just like the continuous waves.
		The majestic Wumeng mountain is just like a rolling mud ball.
	The Red Armies have a kind of natural ease when they meet difficulties.	
	In the Long March, the Red Armies encounter too many difficulties and dangerous on the way.	
Emergent Structure	During the Long March, the Red Armies meet with too many difficulties and dangers, but they remained cheerful spirit and scoffed at difficulties.	

Five ridges refer to those numerous mountains situated among Jiangxi Province, Hunan Province, Guangdong Province and Guangxi province. Because of the length of those mountains, the ridges and the valleys of mountains are just like the continuous waves in appearance. Wumeng Mountain, although it is majestically, in the Red Army’s point of view, it only looks like mud ball.

The metaphor results from the blend which involved two input spaces: the source space of the continuous range of mountains and the majestic Wumeng Mountain; and the target space of the motion of the waves and the mud ball, which mean that the difficulties are not great in the Red Army’s eyes. In input space two, the feature of the scene ‘continuous range of mountains’ indicates that numerous mountains in that area. While, in input space one, the description of mountains characterize of the long journey in the Long March and the uneven ground need to cross. The

counterpart in the two inputs is motivated by the images and scenes from the two input spaces.

As conceptual projection unfolds, a generic space mapping onto each of the input. At the same time, the common structures shared by the two inputs, such as the appearance of the continuous range of mountains is just like the continuous waves. And the material makes of Wumeng Mountain is just like the mud ball.

Structure from two input mental spaces is projected to the blended space. Blends contain generic structure captured in the generic space, but also contain more specific structure due to partial projection. The scene of continuous range of mountains and the majestic Wumeng Mountain implies the difficulties in the Long March.

After the description of the mountains in nature by the poet, the implied meaning in emergent structure is so clearly. During the Long March, the Red Armies meet with too many difficulties and

dangers, but they remained cheerful spirit and scoffed at difficulties.

Sample 4: 从头越，苍山如海，残阳如血。（“忆秦娥 娄山关”）

The Pass of Mount Lou, historically a key pass, is situated to the north of Zunyi, Guizhou Province. After the Zunyi Meeting held in January 1935, Mao Zedong’s leadership was established in the Chinese

Communist Party. The Red Army on the long march seized the Pass of Mount Lou for twice. Although the strategic mission of the long march meets with setback, the battle of the Pass of Mount Lou, the Red Army is of victory. The brave and heroic of the Red Army as well as the revolutionary optimism spirit of the poet encourages them facing of difficulties. (“Table 4”)

Table 4. Conceptual blending network: “苍山如海，残阳如血”

Generic Space	Characteristics: the shape of a stretch of hills; mountain peaks and its valley; the endless sea; the color of setting sun; the boundless beauty of sunset; the magnificent sight of the setting sun.	
Input Space 1	the sea; the blood	
Input Space 2	the mountains; the setting sun	
Blended Space	participants	the mountains and the setting sun
		the sea and the blood
	relationship	The rolling mountains look like the continuous waves.
		The color of sunset looks like the blood.
	The stretches of mountains are resemblance to the sea.	
The color of sunset is resemblance to the blood.		
Emergent Structure	The Red Army and their leaders regard danger as nothing. The Red Army share life and death, and they are invincible.	

In these metaphorical verses, the partial mapping of counterparts is formed between the input space one and input space two. The similar points of the two input spaces compose of generic space, the same characteristics shared from the two spaces; the shape of a stretch of mountain is as alike as the sea, as well as the sunset is similar in color to blood. The generic space reflects cross-space projections of counterpart connections. In the two spaces, the image of mountain is magnificent and mighty, which is the like of the sea. The sunset and its color are also grandeur and beauty, which show a sense of stateliness. The blood, itself, can convey information of solemnity and seriousness. Therefore, the counterpart connection between the sunset and the blood may be existed.

As conceived within conceptual blending theory, blending involves three basic processes, namely ‘composition’, ‘completion’ and ‘elaboration’. Composition is the most straightforward process. The projection of content from each of the inputs into the blended space, such as the mountain, the sea, the sunset and blood, is composition. Completion is the filling out of a pattern in the blend, for example, when people mentally project the shape of a stretch of hills to the sea, and the color of sunset to the blood, people end up

introducing the notion of merely description of natural views and easy, pleasant mood. The completion process is often a source of emergent content in the blend. Elaboration is the simulated mental performance of the event in the blend. Through the previous process, the imagine scenarios unfolds along possible elements. Therefore, the emergent structure deduces the possible meaning that The Red Army and their leaders regard danger as nothing and they always invincible.

5. CONCLUSION

A basic assumption of the possibility of translation, which means meaning can be communicated to some degree in both the source and the target languages, has been challenged more than once on the realm of linguistic and philosophical. Sager makes the points that “all the arguments for and against the possibility of translation can be reduced to a question of the scope of the definition of the concept [of translation].” (Sager, 1993, p.131) Sager proposes his idea on translation that translation possibility is a relative concept. That is to say, “degrees of translatability as defined by the existence (or absence) of units of equivalence between the source

and target languages at different levels of analysis.” (Wang, 2004, p.152) Translation among different languages is feasible.

After the detailed explanations on the meaning of metaphors blended based on the conceptual blending theory in some poems, the following part will pay much more attention to the translation strategies on metaphor in *Poems of Mao Zedong*, and also give the different strategies summarization. Therefore, to illustrate this point, the following typical cases are used to development the author’s argument. There are 30 cases from selected seven poems to analyze the translation strategies on metaphor.

The basic function of metaphor is to describe tenor more sharply, succinctly and vividly; by use of association, which makes people come to understand tenor in depth, as well as arouse their emotions and indoctrinate with the ideas to them. Metaphor has two requirements: the vehicle and the tenor. “A metaphor topic (tenor) is what a metaphor is used to talk about; this equates to the meaning in context of the metaphor vehicle.” (Cameron, 2011, p.37) In the following section, the translation strategies will be analyzed according to these cases. The comprehension of metaphors require two spheres of knowledge: on the one hand, it should know the substantive characteristics of tenor. On the other hand, it should be familiar with the vehicle in a metaphor. How to tackle with the vehicle in translation process usually is a difficult problem. This paper is tried to reason out how the vehicle functions in the metaphor and metaphor translation. Therefore, the standpoint that performs in this thesis carrying out from the three perspectives: to preserve the vehicle, to replace the vehicle and to delete the vehicle.

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