Poetic Metonymy—Humanization in Cries in the Drizzle and Its English

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Abstract: Cries in the Drizzle [1]is a masterpiece of Yu Hua's novels. The success of Cries in the Drizzle lies in its use of cognitive metonymy. Yu Hua constructs unusual collocations with "Adj + N" constructions involving metonymy, such as "stupid slobber" and "clever smile" which abound in Cries in the Drizzle, so that the characters and plot in the novel are vivid and touching. The term "metonymic humanization" first appears in Zhang (2015)[2] modeling on psych "Adj + N" constructions, such as "a small reluctant hand". In the elaboration of this concept, Zhang (2023)[3] proposes that the vivid and touching description in a novel often emerges from embodiment of visual and auditory perceptions in metonymic humanization. According to Zhang, metonymic humanization shares the same mechanism with metonymy. Therefore, it is worthy of taking metonymic humanization approach to the analysis of literary texts. This study examines the unusual collocations with "Adj + N" constructions in Yu Hua's Cries in the Drizzle from the perspective of cognitive poetics, focusing on the mechanism of metonymic humanization. The findings of this study indicate that cognitive metonymy is an effective approach to literary texts and metonymic humanization is an effective way to analysis of unusual collocations in literary texts. And finally in the hope of revealing the hypothesis Zhang (2023)[3] proposed that both Chinese and English should be metonymic.

1. Introduction

Compared to Yu Hua's other works, his first full-length novel, *Cries in the Drizzle*, is more approachable and trustworthy. The huge success lies in its refined metonymic language so that Yu has created the artistic achievements of the novel. However, few scholars have conducted research on it from the perspective of cognitive linguistic. Cognitive poetics is an emerging study in the circle of cognitive linguistics, which is "an interdisciplinary approach to literary research by the tools of Cognitive science" defined by Tsur (2008)[4]. Therefore, cognitive poetics approach to the literary works has great significance.

Recently, with many scholars noticing the importance of metonymy in cognitive linguistic and research proving that metonymy is more fundamental than metaphor (e.g., Barcelona, 2000[5]; Radden, 2000[6]), the study of cognitive metonymy in literary works obviously has linguistic, literary and artistic significance. To the best of my knowledge, so far, the study of cognitive metonymy in *Cries in the Drizzle* has not yet been found.

In all, this paper aims to adopt the cognitive poetics approach to transferred epithet and

metonymic humanization of unusual collocations with "Adj + N" constructions in *Cries in the Drizzle* and its English translation. The only translation of this novel is translated by Allan H. Barr in 2007[7] and published in the United States by Anchor Books. The analysis data is selected from this version.

2. Cognitive Poetics

Cognitive poetics is a new school of literary research in the cognitive field. It provides a new perspective for the study of language and literature, for it integrates the theories and methods of linguistics, stylistics and literary criticism (Feng, 2021[8]). Xiong (2008)[9] believed that cognitive poetics is the combination of traditional linguistics and literature with ontological significance. Therefore, it has a certain reference value for both literature and linguistic study.

2.1 Cognitive Metonymy

The term of "cognitive metonymy" is based on "conceptual metonymy" in "metonymics", which is a new subject of linguistics proposed by Charles (2015)[10]. With cognitive linguistics rising and conceptual metonymy bearing relation with human cognition, conceptual metonymy is developed into cognitive metonymy, the subject of metonymics is developed into "cognitive metonymics" as well. So far, a definition of cognitive linguistics is acknowledged in circle of linguistics originating from Pantherklause-Uwe and Radden's (1999)[11] and they concluded that metonymy is a cognitive process in the same ideal cognitive model (ICM), in which one conceptual entity, i.e., metonymy, provides a psychological way to another entity, i.e., the ontology. The present study is also based on Pantherklause-Uwe and Radden's view.

2.2 Metonymic Humanization

The concept of "metonymic humanization" or "humanization by metonymy" was first proposed by Zhang (2015)[2], which is a cognitive model. Zhang put forward the "Animacy hierarchy", i.e., people or animate > metonymic humanization > inanimate. Here, "metonymic humanization" means that the "person" expressed or referred to through metonymy. Later, Zhang further elaborated on metonymy in 2023, believing that metonymy was the most productive form of metonymy. Metonymic humanization was most commonly found in collocation of "Adj + N", and "adjectives" were usually used to describe psychological, emotional, or physiological states of human beings, such as attributive psych adjective like "reluctant" with its modified inanimate noun like "hand" in the unusual collocations of "the small reluctant hand". Zhang (2023)[3] proposed that the description of plot and affection in the novel was often vivid and dramatic which emerges from embodiment of visual and auditory perception in metonymic humanization. Therefore, it is worthy of taking metonymic humanization approach to literary texts.

3. Analysis of Metonymic Humanization in the Original Text and its English Translation text

The cognitive poetics approach to metonymy matters new insights about the role of these conceptual operations in language and cognition. And both of these developments have led to the rise of new applications of the research on metonymy in various domains, especially translation. The idea that metonymy has become a central issue in the cognitive poetics debate, among which, metonymic humanization as a newly emergent concept has been proved that it is a foundation of metonymy. Consequently, it is necessary to make research about metonymic humanization in literary text.

Detailed metonymic humanization in the original text and translation texts will be on display in the following part of this section.

(1) This was the first celebrity I had known, with an offhand and distracted manner ("suibian he shenjingzhi de fengdu" in Chinese) which often made me to take two hours to the other side of town, in order to talk to him a few minutes.

He was the first celebrity I had known and his offhand, distracted manner inspired me regularly to take a two-hour bus trip to reach the other side of town, just to enjoy a few minutes of conversation with him. (Chapter 2, p. 97)

Words like "offhand" and "distracted" is supposed to modify a person or the attitude of a person, such as "he is offhand with me" and "he seems distracted". Besides, the adjective "offhand" and "distracted" are used to modify a condition or state of a person. Therefore, the use of "offhand, distracted manner" is to express "the celebrity is offhand and distracted with me or things". Yet, in both Chinese and English, those two adjectives is used to modified "manner". "Manner" is a part of a "person", so it forms PART FOR WHOLE metonymy. What's more, "manner" is a noun of metonymic humanization, so this is a typical example of metonymic humanization.

(2) This boy in his eight years old seemed serious and careful. In my impressionable eye ("chongjing de yanshen" in Chinese), this boy was not like his peers a notable doctor.

This boy of eight was the embodiment of carefulness and gravity, and in my impressionable eyes he seemed more like a distinguished medical practitioner than a boy my own age.

The word of "eyes" is inanimate apparently, yet it is in fact an animate word. For, "eyes" is a part of an animate person, here, which is used to refer to "look". To be honest, no matter "eyes" or "look", they both belong to metonymic humanization of PART FOR WHOLE. The word of "impressionable" is a mental or affective adjective, this is a typical metonymic humanization of "mental or affective Adj + N" proposed by Zhang (2015)[2], in which, he elaborated that the structure of "mental or affective Adj + N" is an embodied construction of metonymic humanization, which is closely related to human's life and experience. In addition, the noun in this structure should have the feature of "human being", for mentality and affection must be based on a living man.

(3) Guoqing would appear clever smiles ("congming de xiaorong" in chinese) on his faces.

A canny smile would appear on Guoqing's face. (Chapter 2, p. 246)

The word "canny" is usually used to modify a person or the mind or manner of a person. The word of "smile" is a noun of appearance or looks, which is a part of an animate person, so it becomes animate. Therefore, this collocation of "a canny smile" is a metonymic humanization expression of PART FOR WHOLE, and at the same time, it is also a metonymic humanization of "mental or affective Adj + N". The detail is the same as above, here I do not go into.

4. Conclusions

The overall aim of this research thesis aims to examine the unusual collocations of "Adj + noun" involving metonymic humanization in *Cries in the Drizzle* under the perspective of cognitive poetic. Based on the analysis and major findings, it could be concluded that metonymic humanization is metonymy in essence, which is based on the process of metonymy. Therefore, under the framework of cognitive poetics referring to metonymic humanization makes sense. This facilitates the comprehensive understanding of metonymy in cognitive poetics.

The comparative study of Chinese and English text in unusual collocations involving metonymy reveals both Chinese and English are metonymic language, for collocations with typical metonymy almost are almost retained in English translation. The translator adopts the direct translation method to interpret the structure of "Adj + N", in order to preserve the writing style of original author and vivid and concise language feature of original text. It partly disproves that "English is metaphorical

while Chinese is metonymic" which is concluded by Huang (1994)[12] and proves that "both English and Chinese are metonymic language" proposed by Zhang (2023)[3]. Therefore, metonymy has the same status as metaphor instead that "metonymy is regarded as a sub-type of metaphor" put forward by Song (2011, p. 68)[13].

The present study also has its own limitations and problems. At first, some of metonymic examples are not translated by retaining its original form with "Adj + N" structure due to cultural difference between Chinese and Western, instead that through the way of explaining, adding and omitting. Therefore, the so called "metonymy abounds in English" is needed to be verified further. Second, the concept of "metonymic humanization" is based on "mental or affective adjective + noun" structure, however, some adjectives with no affection are still categorized into this concept. The essence of metonymic humanization is necessary to be explored further, which may not only include mental or affective adjective.

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