

Metaphors of Emotion in Taiwan Sign Language

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ABSTRACT

The study of metaphors is essential for the exploration of human cognition. This paper discusses how Taiwan Sign Language (TSL) expresses the concept of emotion by means of metaphors, with special focus on the emotion of anger. As Lakoff and Zoltán (1987) have pointed out, concepts such as ANGER IS FIRE and ANGER IS THE HEAT OF HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER are often used to describe the emotion of ANGER (e.g. *He was breathing fire* and *I had reached the boiling point*).

As pointed out by Yu (2009), English and Chinese share the same central conceptual metaphor ANGER IS HEAT for the metaphorical expressions of anger. However, English has selected FIRE and FLUID metaphors, whereas Chinese uses FIRE and GAS for the same purpose. For instance, *Ta man qiang nu-huo* (he full cavity angry-fire) ‘He’s filled with anger’ and *Ta bie le yi duzi qi* (he hold-back LE one belly gas) ‘He was filled with pent-up anger’ (Yu 2009: 6, 9). This shows that different languages may differ in some aspects in the metaphorical expressions of anger. This study shows that, unlike Chinese, TSL prefers to select FLUID and GAS metaphors to express anger.

This paper will use Mental Space Theory (Fauconnier 1994, 1997; Fauconnier and Turner 2002) to discuss (a) how the concept THE HEAT OF FLUID IN A CONTAINER is used as the source domain to describe the metaphors of anger as the target domain in TSL, (b) how degrees of anger are expressed in TSL, based on the linguistic structures in the source domain, and (c) how the concepts of bodily experiences are blended for the metaphorical expressions of anger in TSL.

Keywords : Taiwan Sign Language, metaphors, emotions, anger, Mental Space Theory