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Research Article

COGNITIVE BASES OF CHINESE SICHUAN FOOD NAMES

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the content of Chinese Sichuan culinary names and the cognitive mechanisms involved in their formation. The concept of metonymy was utilized to analyze conceptual metaphors. These linguistic units' distinctive characteristics have been identified.

KEYWORDS

Cognitive mechanisms; cognitive metaphor, metonymy; Names of Chinese Sichuan dishes.

INTRODUCTION

China has historically been a land of rituals and decorum, and dining plays a significant role in this. Numerous millennia have passed since the beginning of Chinese cuisine, which is reflected in ceremonial dinners. "Traditionally, the most delicate dishes are set in the center of the table for everyone to partake. This ancient custom is further evidence of the significance of food in Chinese culture: cooked dishes, not flowers, are the centerpiece of the Chinese table" [1].

Our research focuses on the cognitive mechanisms (primarily cognitive metaphor and metonymy) underlying the names of popular Chinese Sichuan dishes. Consequently, the research is pertinent to the disciplines of cognitive linguistics.

Cognitive linguistics is a rapidly developing field and a new science in this direction in the twenty-first century. This science is currently one of the

most significant branches of linguistics, occupying an important position in contemporary linguistics. Cognitive linguistics is a branch of linguistics that investigates the relationship between language and consciousness, the role of language in conceptualizing and categorizing the world, in cognitive processes and generalizing human experience, the relationship with an individual's cognitive abilities, and the forms and interactions of language.

Cognitivism is, in general, a collection of disciplines that examines the general principles that regulate thought processes. Thus, language is portrayed as a gateway to mental processes. Language is the foundation of human experience and thought; language is a cognitive mechanism, a system of symbols that encodes and transforms information [2].

Cognitive (conceptual) metaphor and metonymy, which are hardly novel to current linguistic research and are therefore only briefly defined below, are the two primary theoretical instruments used in this study.

To better comprehend the concept of conceptual metaphor in cognitive linguistics, we must distinguish it from straightforward metaphor. "A straightforward metaphor transfers only one characteristic of the object or entity being compared. In a conceptual metaphor, multiple characteristics of the object or things being compared should be transferred. Consciousness, cognition, and thinking play a crucial role in the transfer of several characteristics" [3].

"Metonymy is predicated on the relationship between two or more people, or the whole and its element. Contiguity is, in general, a condition of connection between part and whole, container and content, place and its inhabitants, and others" [4]. Metonymy is a transfer of dissimilar concepts based on their similarity. In metonymy, the name of one object or event is transferred to another, but this renaming is not based on resemblance, but on proximity and relationship. It is a spiritual transmission between the part and the whole, and vice versa. R. Langaker views metonymy as a subfield of cognitive science and characterizes it as the mental perception of one concept by means of another [5].

One of the traditional dishes of Sichuan, 子母会 (mother-child union), is prepared from pigeon and its eggs. Pigeon is prepared in a special manner, cooked pigeon meat is placed in the center of the dish, and pigeon eggs are gathered around it before being served. The metaphorical mapping in this instance is based on the parallel between mother and infant and the dove and its eggs. The dish's name is derived from the conceptual analogies mother-dove and baby-egg.

Another popular dish, 樱桃肉 (cherry meat), is a traditional dish that is brilliant red, sweet and sour, salty, and shaped like a cherry. The transition in thought occurs between cherry and sour chicken. Meat and cherries share a comparable flavor, color, and form, which is the basis for metaphorical mapping. A person experiences the flavor of

cherry fruit when consuming sustenance. This delicacy is popular with the Chinese. This dish is notably favored by females.

The 炸班指 zha banzhi dish has a distinctive flavor and appearance. “The color of this dish is golden, the skin is crisp, and the flesh is fatty, and the flavor is simply incredible. The flavor is sweet and sour, and the preparation method is moderately challenging” [6]. 班指 banzhi is a jasper (nephrite) ring that is worn on the forefinger. Initially, archers launched while wearing the bow on the thumb of their right hand. It was used to prevent a finger from being sliced by a taut bowstring. This dish utilizes fatty colon in its preparation. For this reason, this cuisine appears as a ring in the metaphorical mapping. Conceptually, there is a transition between a ring and a fatty colon.

The conceptual transformation of 水晶鸭方 shuijing ya fang (crystal duck) is also metaphorical. This dish is essentially duck meat jelly or duck meat with a texture similar to crystal. A conceptual shift incorporates crystal and flesh mapping. Consequently, the conceptual metaphor of meat as a crystal underpins the entire significance of the food nomination.

Clearly, this dish is founded on the conceptual metonymy of 叫化鸡 jiao hua ji (Beggar's Chicken), which can be found on the menus of many Chinese restaurants. This dish acquired its name because a poor man created it. The conceptual transition here is from the beggar to the poor man's method of cooking chicken, which

is wrapped in mud and cooked over an open fire, or, more generally, is an actor for its movement-related characteristics.

夫妻肺片 fuqifeipian (double lung slice), ranked among the top ten classic Sichuan dishes of “Chinese Cuisine”, is also an example of a clear conceptual metaphor, metonymy. This is a chilled dish consisting of thinly sliced beef. Based on the fact that the language is visible, Feipian (lung slice) does not directly imply a piece of lung; rather, it refers to the metaphorical mapping of the color, shape, and appearance of food as a lung slice. The metaphorical relationship between lungs and beef undergoes a conceptual transition. Additionally, metonymy is present here. This dish received its name because it was created by a husband and wife named Guo in 1933. The conceptual shift is founded on a human and a human body part. It is obvious to native speakers that this dish has nothing to do with human anatomy. The conceptualizer may choose between a metaphorical or metonymic interpretation of a culinary name image.

东坡墨鱼 Dongpo moyu (Dongpo crustacean fish) is the most well-known and costly species of fish. If we examine the past, we find that fishermen believed this fish could travel from stone to stone; perhaps this is where the name “crustacean” came from. His physique is ebony. “According to legend, the Dongpo jam fish did not have an ebony body. When Su Dongpo was an adolescent during the Song Dynasty, he studied at the Longhong Mountain Temple in Leshan and frequently went to the river to wash the ink stones. Some of the

fish transformed into dragons and flew away after drinking this water” [7]. So, this dish received its name from the famous Dongpo because, according to legend, Dongpo fed these fish ink, which turned them black, and thus this dish was created. The conceptual shift comprises the transfer between the source concept and the target concept of Dongpo-named fish dish. Nonetheless, the conceptual shift in the dish's moniker can be explained metaphorically: At the time, the celebrity lent his or her name to a fish-based culinary product.

Analyzing the names of Chinese dishes led us to the conclusion that cognitive metaphor and metonymy are the foundation of the Chinese cuisine naming process. Metaphorical cross-mapping is based on similarities in food's overall appearance, color, flavor, and texture; source concepts can be general or specific in nature, beings (real or mythical), or objects. The uniqueness of the Chinese image is effectively conveyed through conceptual metonymies, some of which are founded on myths, legends, and history.

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