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Synchronic and Diachronic Metaphorical Explorations of English Idioms with Food names and Comparisons with their Mandarin Chinese Semantically-corresponding Counterparts

National Tsing-Hua University

Chihhsia Tang

d934711@oz.nthu.edu.tw

According to the definition on The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language 4th Edition, an idiom is *a speech form or an expression of a given language that is peculiar to it grammatically or cannot be understood from the individual meanings of its elements*. The aim of present investigation is to find out whether habitual collocations are certainly semantically-abstract as the definition through explorations of ten English idioms each with a name of food as well as their Mandarin Chinese equivalents. Comparisons of the metaphorical sources in English and Mandarin Chinese idioms have also been done.

What has been found in this study is that idioms, which stem from their own historical developments, are culturally-oriented. It would be more likely that foods, which are more common to people's daily lives, are included into metaphorical expressions. And the figurative interpretations of the idioms are tightly connected with the conceptual structures or the shape of the foods concerned. For example, "apple" is frequently cooperated into English idioms, such as "apple of one's eye", but could not be found in Mandarin Chinese because of its exoticism under the Chinese culture. And for idioms that are borrowed from the other language, modifications of metaphorical sources could be possible. Conceptually-unfamiliar sources would be slightly adjusted to elements that accommodate identical conceptual structures of the concerned language, and the replacement of the original source would be in hyponymy relationship to its counterpart. For example, the English "hot potato" is veered to "sweet potato" in Mandarin "tang shou san yu". However, on the other hand, if the metaphorical source is not unfamiliar to language users of the other language or the conceptual structure used for creating the idiom is available in two languages, modification of vehicles would be unnecessary, such as "sa fa ma ling chu", originally derived from English, is directly turned into a calque in Mandarin.