

Course Syllabus

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HUMA2010 Metaphors in English and Chinese [C]
Wed & Fri 16:30PM - 17:50PM

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Course description

A comprehensive study of metaphors in English and Chinese, not only as a rhetorical device, but also as an essential tool of our ordinary language and thought. The course encompasses a wide range of diverse topics such as literary metaphors, metaphors in everyday language (about time, life, change, quantity, love, anger, etc.), and metaphors in politics, mathematics, physics, artificial intelligence, and cyberspace. The approach is interdisciplinary and comparative, and most topics are to be discussed from a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspective.

An ordinary reading knowledge of Chinese is required for enrollment.

Course objectives

The course is designed to introduce students to the contemporary studies of metaphor, and train them on how to identify, comprehend, and analyze conceptual metaphors in English and Chinese. In this course, metaphor is viewed not as merely a matter of language, as a rhetorical device for increasing the persuasiveness of a piece of writing, but as a matter of thought, as a pervasive and essential tool of ordinary thinking, which shapes not just our communication, but also the way we think and act. Data taken from English and Chinese texts belonging to various genres, including literary works, ordinary speech, as well as learned and scientific writings, will be used to demonstrate how abstract reasoning is made possible through metaphorization, i.e., metaphors serving to facilitate the understanding of one area of experience (typically more abstract) through expressions that relate to another, more familiar and concrete conceptual domain.

It will guide students to explore the following important questions:

- (1) How are abstract concepts metaphorically understood and expressed in English and Chinese?
- (2) Which conceptual metaphors are widespread or universal, and which are culture-specific?
- (3) How is Chinese similar to or different from English in certain aspects of the conceptual system of metaphor? How can we account for the commonalities and differences found in the two languages?
- (4) How to make a structural analysis of conceptual metaphors from real life language data (including academic writings in the student's own major field of study).

Intended learning outcomes

- Describe how metaphor works with examples from our ordinary language
- Distinguish the traditional and contemporary theories of metaphor
- Identify and analyze metaphors in English and Chinese in the contemporary cognitive approach to metaphor

- Identify, analyze, and account for similarities and differences between English and Chinese in metaphorical conceptualization

Major topics to be covered

(Note: contents and order subject to change)

1. Why Study Metaphor?
2. Traditional and Contemporary Theories of Metaphor
3. How Literary Metaphor Works
4. Properties of Conceptual Metaphor
5. Types of Metaphor
6. Orientational Metaphors & the Grounding of Metaphors
7. TIME AS SPACE: A Contrastive Study of Chinese and English
8. From Space to Non-space: Motion Verbs & Locative Nouns in English and Chinese
9. Emotion Metaphors
10. Supplementary Topic 1: Conventional Metonymies in English
11. Supplementary Topic 2: Image Schema and Function Words in English and Chinese
12. Supplementary Topic 3: Figure vs Ground; Trajectory vs Landmark, and the OVER Schema
13. Supplementary Topic 4: Logical Inference, and TIME IS A LIMIT RESOURCE
14. Supplementary Topic 5: Force Dynamics, Image Schemata, and Metaphorical Extension of Modal Verbs
15. Supplementary Topic 6: Up and Above in Chinese: Metaphorical Extensions of Meaning
16. Supplementary Topic 7: Metaphors We Compute By
17. Supplementary Topic 8: Metaphors in Scientific Thinking

Assessment

Attendance: 10%

Quiz / Assignment: 40%

- One short quiz, and one short squib (or quiz) (each 20%)

Final exam: 50%

- A three-hour final exam which consists of MC questions, short essays, and data-oriented problem solving questions.

Major reading materials (see "Assignments" page for details)

1. Lakoff, George. 1993. "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor." Available online @ <http://terpconnect.umd.edu/~israel/lakoff-ConTheorMetaphor.pdf>
2. Lakoff, G. & M. Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
3. Kovecses, Zoltan. 2002. *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
4. Yu, Ning. 1998. *The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor: A Perspective from Chinese*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.