

## 摘 要

隐喻研究传统上局限于修辞层和语言层,其主要理论可以归结为三种:比较理论、替代理论和互动理论。近二十年来,隐喻研究在认知科学领域的发展得到了越来越广泛的认同。Lakoff 和 Johnson 的“概念隐喻理论”从认知的角度拓宽了隐喻的研究范围。认知理论认为隐喻不仅仅是一种语言现象,更是一种认知现象,是我们认知和理解世界的工具。人类赖以生存的许多基本概念系统以及人类思维方式乃至行为方式本质上都是隐喻性的。

概念隐喻是 Lakoff 隐喻理论的一个重要概念。概念隐喻的形成是以人类身体经验为基础的。语言中大量的植物隐喻本质上是概念隐喻的一种。植物隐喻是人类认识世界的一种重要认知方式。然而,目前国内学者对于植物隐喻化及英汉植物隐喻对比所作的研究还不多,以往对于英汉植物词对比所做的研究主要集中于其文化意义的差异,语料上也仅限于某几个特定的植物的对比。鉴于此,本文以植物隐喻为研究内容,对大量英汉语料进行分析,着重探讨两种语言在植物隐喻表达上的异同。研究发现,英汉语中存在着大量的植物隐喻,英汉植物隐喻的投射模式存在着共性,其共同点揭示了英汉植物隐喻同样源于身体经验,具有共同的心理基础。同时,英汉语在隐喻表达上也存在着很大的差异,主要表现在五个方面:一是汉语中多以植物比喻人的优秀品质,植物被人格化,成为人格的象征;英语中多以植物指神,植物被用来象征希腊神话中的神。二是英语中习惯以花代言,即用一种花木代表一个特定的意义,用花木来表示自己所要表达的意思。而汉语中则出现了空缺。三是与汉语相比,英语植物隐喻的意义类型较多,英语中植物用以喻指制成品,钱财物,军事体育弹药器材,而汉语中则出现空缺。四是英汉语所重视的植物不同,汉语中花草树木有着丰富的隐喻意义,而英语中水果蔬菜多被用来喻指物体或概念。五是汉语的名词优势和英语的动词优势:汉语的名词优势就是汉语中的植物隐喻词大多用作名词,一般不能直接转义用作动词;英语的动词优势就是英语族人经常把表示植物的概念域直接投射于表示动作的抽象概念域,表现在英语中就是通常用作名词的植物隐喻词直接转义用作动词。这反映了植物隐喻受不同文化的影响,呈现出文化差异性和民族性。本文从地理环境,思维方式,审美标准,文学传统,社会习俗和语言类型上的不同对这

些差异作出解释。

这项研究从认知的角度对植物隐喻化和英汉植物隐喻作了较为全面的探讨，通过英汉对比，进一步证实了植物隐喻存在着认知普遍性以及文化相对性。在一定程度上弥补了目前对于植物隐喻研究的不足。

**关键词：**植物隐喻；认知普遍性；文化相对性；英汉对比

## **Abstract**

Metaphor has traditionally been studied by scholars in the fields of rhetoric and linguistics. The main theories of this tradition can be summarized as the Comparison theory, the Substitution theory and the Interaction theory. Over the past two decades, metaphor study has become increasingly popular in the field of cognitive science. Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory reinforces the trend of cognitive study on metaphor. According to this cognitive theory, the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. Our ordinary conceptual system by means of which we live, think and act is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.

Conceptual metaphor, that has become part of our everyday speech, is an important concept in Conceptual Metaphor theory. Conceptual metaphors are rooted in our bodily experience. Plant metaphor is in nature a kind of conceptual metaphor and it is a main cognitive method of human being. However, few scholars have extended their antennae into the field of contrastive study of plant metaphor. There are few comprehensive and systemic studies on plant metaphorization and contrast of plant metaphors in English and Chinese. The former contrastive studies on plant terms mainly focused on the differences of the culture-loaded meanings of certain plant words. In view of these factors, this paper takes up plant metaphor as its subject to study, based on the analysis of a large amount of linguistic data from English and Chinese in terms of plant metaphors. The research discovers some common features of plant metaphors in English and Chinese. The similarities in mapping models reflect the fact that there exists cognitive universality in plant metaphor due to the common basic body experience. Meanwhile, there still exist great differences: First, Chinese is rich in plant metaphors about characters and moralities, while English tends to use plants denote gods and goddesses. Secondly, "flower language", namely, the

mapping from a flower to an appointed sentiment or intention, is unique in English, and there is no such mapping in Chinese. Thirdly, the mapping domains of plant metaphors in English are wider than in Chinese. There are plant metaphors about money, finished products, ammunition, equipments, sports items and machines in English, while in Chinese, the mapping domains are much narrower. Fourthly, the plants that Chinese and English attach importance to are different. Flowers and trees have rich metaphorical meanings in Chinese, while in English, vegetables, fruits and grains are more commonly used to denote concrete and abstract things. The fifth difference is the preponderance of nouns in Chinese and verbs in English. Most plant terms in Chinese are mapped onto nominal domains with few onto verbal ones, while in English, plant terms are often mapped onto the verbal domains directly, thus the nouns are transformed into verbs directly. These differences are largely due to cultural relativity and nationality. Hence, this paper tries to account for these differences by referring to the differences in natural environments, thinking models, aesthetic standards, national literature traditions, social conventions and linguistic forms.

This paper makes a relatively complete study of plant metaphors from the cognitive perspective. Based on the contrastive study in English and Chinese, this research reinforces that plant metaphor is characterized by cognitive universality and cultural relativity. Meanwhile, it will, to a certain degree, supplement the study of plant metaphor.

**Key words:** plant metaphor, cognitive universality, cultural relativity, contrastive study in English and Chinese

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## **Chapter One      Introduction**

### **1.1 Motivation of the thesis**

Metaphor, as a rhetorical device, once arrested much attention of both English and Chinese scholars two thousand years ago. In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in it. Various types of research methodology have been employed in metaphor studies. Thus metaphor has been explored more systematically and multangularly than ever before. No wonder some scholars both in China and western countries call this phenomenon “metaphoric revolution” (Wang Yin, 2001:313), “metaphormanin” (Shu Dingfang, 2000:5) or “metaphorology” (Radman, 1995:3).

In recent years more and more scholars turned their attention to the contrastive study of metaphor between English and Chinese, but these studies mainly focus on spatialization metaphor, temporal metaphor, emotional metaphor, color metaphor, etc.. Few scholars have extended their antennae into the field of contrastive study of plant metaphor, which is also an important part of metaphor study.

Having close ties with human life, plants constitute a key link of ecological system. Through long-term social production and careful observation of various plants, people have accumulated an overall understanding and a profound knowledge of their growing habits, appearances, and features etc., which would be embodied in human language inevitably. Therefore in human communication, abundant plant terms are widely used to enrich the vocabulary of human languages. The vivid images of plants enhance greatly the expressivity of language by associating things with the features of plants showed from either external appearances or internal qualities. Due to the ubiquity of plant metaphors in English and Chinese, as well as the deficiency of studies on plant metaphors, it is necessary to make a systematic and comprehensive analysis of contrastive study on plant metaphors in English and Chinese.

### **1.2 Aim of the thesis**

The former studies on plant terms are mainly focused on the differences of the

culture-loaded meanings of certain plant words. There are no comprehensive and systematic classification, description and contrast of plant metaphors in English and Chinese. In this thesis, detailed contrast would enable us to find that English and Chinese share in the mapping domains of human beings, concrete things, as well as abstract things. The similarities in mapping models of plant metaphors in English and Chinese prove that plant metaphor is an important means of understanding the world, an essential way of conceptualizing experience, a cognitive tool in creating new meaning. It is a witness to the cognitive universality.

The task I have set myself in this paper is to conduct a systematic contrastive study of plant metaphors in English and Chinese from the cognitive point of view, in the hope of making a little contribution to the research of plant metaphor. Based on the contrastive study in English and Chinese, this research reinforces some theories of the contemporary cognitive approach to conceptual metaphor: as least conceptual metaphor of plant parts is characterized by cognitive universality and cultural relativity. Meanwhile, it will, to a certain degree, supplement the study of plant metaphor.

### 1.3 Literature review

The study of metaphors witnesses a very long history. It may be traced back to the ages of Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) who believed that metaphors were pleasing words that made us learn something (Aristotle, 1958:70, 88, 89). But at the same time, he regarded the right use of metaphors as a sign of inborn talent and couldn't be learned from anyone else. He confined metaphor to the realm of rhetoric only with reference to a single word. This constrains him from further discovery of the genuine nature of metaphor. Guided by Aristotle's view, scholars for a long time regarded metaphor as a matter of language, especially a rhetorical device utilized for solely ornamental reasons.

Aristotle's view was challenged in the 1930s with the publication of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Very different from Aristotle, Richards, the writer of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, first studied the cognitive function of metaphor. The role of



metaphor was shifted from a matter of figurative device to a matter of language and a matter of ideas to some extent.

Although the classical views have important and influential role for centuries, more and more weak points apparently meet challenges to comprehensive and reasonable understanding of metaphor. This has compelled scholars to find more sounding explanations for metaphor. From the 1960s on, the study of metaphor has manifested depth and width in cognitive aspect. Metaphor is seen as a means by which more abstract and intangible areas of experience can be conceptualized in terms of the familiar and concrete. Metaphor is thus motivated by a search for understanding and should be called a figure of thought. In recent years, many linguists, including Gibbs (1994), Johnson (1987), Kovecses (1986), Lakoff (1980, 1989, 1993), and Fauconnier (1994, 1997) etc. have devoted considerable attentions to this new theory of metaphor which takes the cognitive nature of metaphor as its grounding.

Cognitive view claims that: (Kovecses, 2002)

① Metaphor is a property of concepts, and not of mere words. “Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 3).

② The function of metaphor is to better understand certain concepts, and not just for some artistic or esthetic purpose.

③ Metaphor is often not based on similarity but itself creates similarity. Cognitive view emphasizes “the only similarities relevant to metaphor are similarities as experienced by people” (Lakoff&Johnson, 1980: 154) contrasted with traditional view which viewed that similarities most often are objective.

④ Metaphor is used effortlessly in every day life by ordinary people, not just by special talented people.

⑤ Metaphor, far from being a parasitic thought pleasing linguistic ornament, is an inevitable process of human thought and reasoning.

The contemporary contrastive studies of metaphor mainly focus on spatialization metaphor, temporal metaphor, emotional metaphor, color metaphor and body

metaphor based on Lakoff's Conceptual Metaphor Theory. There are few comprehensive and systematic studies on plant metaphors in English and Chinese in terms of cognitive construction and contrastive study. Ren Shuning's *On Metaphors of Plant Terms* (2006) and Tang Yanping's *The Metaphorical Meaning of Botanical Words in the Light of Cognition* (2002) aim to prove that metaphor is a means of cognitive process and basically a cognitive phenomenon. There is no systematic contrast of plant metaphors in these two articles. Besides, the plant metaphors mentioned in the two articles are limited to the following words: "shoot", "root", "seed", "stem", "flower", "blossom", "cultivate", "reap", "germinate", "wilt" in English and "种植", "凋谢", "收割", "嫁接", "繁殖", "芽", "茎", "花", "叶", "根" in Chinese. As to the former studies on contrast of plant words in English and Chinese, the author found 29 articles from 1994 to 2006 in Tsinghua Tongfang Database. In *A Contrastive Study of English and Chinese Culturally-loaded Plant Words* (Liao Guangrong, 2002), the writer analyzes and compares with data statistics the culturally-loaded plants words in English and Chinese in various aspects: the total number, the number of polysemous words, the proportion of culturally-loaded words, meaning types, the modes of meaning change, and word formation, etc. He classifies the meaning types of plant words into twenty-three types, namely, part of plant (root, stem, tuber, fruit, etc.); finished products; color; smell; genera; species; other plants; human or god; body part or physical appearance; animal; disease; money; ammunition, equipment, sports items and machines; candy, alcohol, tobacco; things similar in shape with plant; concept; surname; star; place; time; alternative name; emblem; and language form. His classifications are partly used for reference in this thesis. In *A Comparative Study of the Connotations of Plant Words* (Zhang An de, Yang Yuan gang, 2002), the writer compares and analyses the connotations of plant words in three aspects, i.e. the semantic overlap, the semantic mismatch and the semantic gap, revealing the relevant social and cultural psychology and its influences on the cross-cultural communication. The rest of the articles the author finds are of similar patterns with *A Comparative Study of the Connotations of Plant Words*.

#### **1.4 Methodology, organization and data collection of the thesis**

In order to make this thesis as scientific and persuasive as possible, the methods of illustration, comparison, and frequency analysis are employed to carry out comparative analysis on plant metaphors in English and Chinese. The similarities and differences, as well as the causes contribute to them are discussed, thus to supplement and perfect the studies on plant metaphors.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter, the motivation, aim, methodology, organization, data collection and literature review are introduced. In the second chapter, the modern cognitive theories of metaphor are briefly introduced. It also provides a general statement of Conceptual Metaphor Theory in respect of cognitive nature, cognitive functions, as well as the classifications and the working mechanism of conceptual metaphor. The next two chapters are the central parts of the whole paper. In the third chapter, I first discuss the cognition of plant metaphor, and then by analyzing much linguistic data, I report my study on plant metaphors in English and Chinese: what similarities and differences there are between English and Chinese in terms of plant metaphors. According to the research in chapter three, in the fourth chapter, I summarize the similarities and differences of plant metaphors in English and Chinese, and then I attempt to analyze the causes especially by referring to different cultural perceptions between English and Chinese.

According to Shu Dingfang, metaphor is formed so long as one kind of object is used to talk about another kind of object in certain context. Then, metaphor may appear on each level of language units, such as a word, a term, a sentence and an utterance. According to the context, the utterance can be a single word, a sentence, a poem, a piece of writing, even a group of works. Thus, idiom, proverb, even the whole literary work such as a poem and a novel can be looked upon as representative, expanded metaphor (Shu Dingfang, 2000: 36). The plant metaphors employed in this thesis range from words to poems.

First, the author finds out 510 plant words of 17 species from the *Appendix • Common Animal and Plant in A Classified & Illustrated English-Chinese Dictionary* (1981), as well as some words closely related to plants, such as “root”,

“stem”, “bud”, “flower”, “blossom”, “leaf”, “根”, “茎”, “叶”, “芽”, and “花”. Then, the author looks up each word in *The English-Chinese Dictionary* (Lu Gusun, 2003), *Longman contemporary English-Chinese dictionary*(1996), *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* (1999) and *Practical Chinese Dictionary* (2000), and finds out 131 plant words with metaphorical meaning in Chinese and 227 in English. The example sentences in this thesis are mainly from the dictionaries listed above, *300 Tang Poems*, *300 Song Ci Poems*, *A Dream of the Red Mansions*, as well as some other classical literary works.

## **Chapter Two    Modern cognitive theories of metaphor**

The study of metaphor witnesses a very long history. It may be traced back to the ages of Aristotle (384-322B.C.), whose theory of metaphor is called the Comparison theory and dominates the mainstream of metaphor study for about two thousand years. After Aristotle, Quintillian proposed the Substitution theory that treated metaphor in the same way as the Comparison theory. Aristotle and Quintillian are regarded as the leading representatives of the first stage of metaphor study, metaphor as rhetoric device. It was in the 20th century that Richards, I. A. proposed his famous Interactive theory and he is the leading exponent of the second stage of metaphor study, the transition from rhetoric device to cognitive device. In the year of 1980, the study of metaphor turned to a new page, shifting away from the linguistic aspects of metaphor and the ornamental function of metaphor to the cognitive nature of metaphor. The representative figures are Lakoff & Johnson with their Conceptual Metaphor theory.

### **2.1 Conceptual metaphor**

In the year of 1980, with the publication of *Metaphor We Live By*, the study of metaphor turned to a new page, shifting away from the linguistic aspects of metaphor and the ornamental function of metaphor to the cognitive nature of metaphor. *Metaphor We Live By* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* (Lakoff, 1987) are considered as two classical works in cognitive linguistics. In 1999, Lakoff and Johnson published *Philosophy in the Flesh-The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*. Till then, Lakoff and Johnson have formed their systemic cognitive theory to metaphor in terms of the nature of metaphor, the definition of metaphor, the classification of metaphor, the language theory, the philosophical view, etc.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980:3) claim that “our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.” Let’s take the abstract concept “argument” for example to see what it could mean for a

concept to be metaphorical and for such a concept to structure an everyday activity.

Your claims are indefensible.

He attacked every weak point in my argument.

His criticisms were right on target.

I demolished his argument.

I've never won an argument with him.

He shot down all of my arguments.

You disagree? Okay, shoot!

If you use that strategy, he'll wipe you out.

From the examples we can see that we don't just talk about argument in terms of war. We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies. If we find position indefensible, we can abandon it and take a new line of attack. Many of the things we do in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war. Though there is no physical battle, there is a verbal battle, and the structure of an argument--attack, defense, counterattack, etc. -- reflects this. According to Lakoff (1987), the correspondence between argument and war is not simply a conventional linguistic strategy for talking about argument, but a mental structure to represent abstract concepts, which he calls conceptual metaphorical concept. In the language study, conceptual metaphor is represented in capital form such as ARGUMENT IS WAR, TIME IS MONEY, GOOD IS UP, etc. Lakoff and Johnson claim that:

"Many aspects of our experience cannot be clearly delineated in terms of the naturally emergent dimensions of our experience. This is typically the case for human emotions, abstract concepts, and mental activity. Though most of these can be experienced directly, none of them can be fully comprehended on their own terms. Instead, we must understand them in terms of other entities and experiences" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Thus a metaphorical concept, say, ARGUMENT IS WAR, structures (at least in part) what we do and how we understand what we are doing when we argue. As Lakoff and

Johnson (1980:5) put it, “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.” It is not that arguments are a subspecies of war. Arguments and wars are different kinds of things—verbal discourse and armed conflict—and the actions performed are different kinds of actions. But ARGUMENT is partially structured, understood, performed, and talked about in terms of war. The concept is metaphorically structured, the activity is metaphorically structured, and, consequently, the language is metaphorically structured.

From the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor, we can see that the contemporary theory of metaphor has redefined the term “metaphor” to be fundamentally conceptual rather than linguistic in nature. For the sake of better understanding conceptual metaphor, we should make a distinction between **conceptual metaphor** (or metaphorical concepts) and **linguistic metaphor** (or metaphorical expressions). Conceptual metaphors or metaphorical concepts refer to abstract notions such as ARGUMENT IS WAR, TIME IS MONEY, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, etc. While linguistic metaphors or metaphorical expressions refer to the specific linguistic expressions that reflect, or make manifest, those conceptual metaphors in one way or another such as “Your claims are indefensible”, “You’re wasting my time”. Conceptual metaphor is based on men’s bodily experience; not created at one’s pleasure and it is the result of thinking process in which metaphorical expressions are synthesized and generalized. Thus metaphorical expressions in language are seen to be no more than a surface manifestation of metaphorical concepts.

From the above analysis, we can see that conceptual metaphor is a system of metaphor that lies behind much of everyday language and structures our everyday system, including most abstract concepts.

## **2.2 Cognitive functions of metaphor**

One of the most significant contributions of the Conceptual Metaphor theory is not rhetorical phenomenon, but an important means and method in the cognition of human beings (Shu Dingfang, 2001). The cognitive functions of metaphor lie in three aspects: an important means of understanding the world; an essential way of

conceptualizing experience; a cognitive tool in creating new meaning.

### **2.2.1 An important means of understanding the world**

Departing from the traditional view, Lakoff and Johnson claimed that the primary function of metaphor was to understand difficult, complex, abstract concepts. They pointed out “the metaphor comes out of our clearly delineated and concrete experience and allow us to construct highly abstract and elaborate concepts...” (Lakoff&Johnson, 1980: 105).

We do this by trying to understand such a concept TIME in terms of another, less complicated, physical, or more clearly delineated concept, for example, MONEY. The concept we manage to understand TIME is called the “target”, and the concept used for this purpose, MONEY, is called the “source” by Lakoff and Johnson. Therefore, TIME IS MONEY is a conceptual metaphor that is used in the production and interpretation of the native linguistic metaphors, the spoken or written realizations of the conceptual metaphor. Thus, underlying the conceptual metaphor TIME IS MONEY, there exist the following linguistic metaphors:

#### **(1) TIME IS MONEY**

I've invested a lot of time on her.

How do you spend your time these days?

The flat tire cost me an hour.

You need to budget your time.

Is that worth your time?

You don't use your time profitably.

This gadget will save you hours.

I lost a lot of time when I got sick. (ibid: 7-8)

In our daily life, we are always inclined to understand and experience unfamiliar, intangible, abstract concepts in terms of familiar, tangible, concrete ones. According to Lakoff and Johnson, our normal conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. They state that metaphorical concepts arise from our physical and cultural experience and structure our basic everyday activities in a very profound way and that



human conceptual system which guides the thought and action of individuals is constructed metaphorically in nature. So metaphor is an important means of understanding the world.

### **2.2.2 An essential way of conceptualizing experience**

Human conceptual systems are in large measure structured via metaphor, mapping the concrete and physical onto the abstract and nonphysical. Such metaphorical mappings are not arbitrary, but constrained by our embodied nature. That is to say, metaphor is deeply rooted in our bodily experience--how our bodies function and interact with the world (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1987). So in this sense, we can say that metaphor is an important cognitive means to conceptualize our experience.

Our conceptual system is based on the ontological metaphor to a great degree. Ontological metaphor is a kind of conceptual metaphor and includes entity and substance metaphor by which we can regard some experience as entity and substance. Once we do so, we can refer to them, categorize them, qualify them and make some rational discussions on them. For example, we look on mind as an entity, thus, we can refer to our experience of it:

#### **(2) MIND IS A BRITTLE OBJECT**

Her ego is very fragile.

You have to handle him with care since his wife's death.

He broke under cross-examination.

Such ontological metaphor is very necessary for us to understand our experience. They are so natural and common that they are always regarded as direct descriptions of mind. Generally speaking, we are inclined to use physical experience to structure and order nonphysical experience such as our emotional, psychological and cultural experience which may be the most basic experience of human beings. For example, in the following sentences, the first one is our direct experience, the second and the third are metaphorical expressions of metaphor **SOCIAL GROUPS ARE CONTAINERS** and **EMOTIONAL STATES ARE CONTAINERS** respectively:

- (3) a. Harry is in the kitchen
- b. Harry is in the Elks.
- c. Harry is in love. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980)

Metaphor affects cognitive activities of human beings potentially and profoundly. It is an essential way of conceptualizing experience.

### **2.2.3 A cognitive tool in creating new meaning**

Metaphor we have discussed is conventional one that structures the ordinary conceptual system of our culture and is reflected in our daily life. Another kind of metaphor is imaginative and is called new metaphor by Lakoff and Johnson. We have discussed in last chapter that metaphor is traditionally viewed as a linguistic means of describing certain preexisting similarities between two things in the world. On the contrary, cognitive linguists emphasize that in many cases metaphors are conceptual devices used for understanding or creating reality, rather than merely describing it. By means of creating similarities, new metaphors make us notice aspects of things we didn't notice before. They can give new meanings to our daily activities, and to what we knew and believed. In *Metaphor We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson took the new metaphor LOVE IS A COLLABORATIVE WORK OF ART as the typical example to disclose the function of metaphor as creating new meanings. Our personal views of work and art give rise to at least the following entailments for this metaphor:

#### **(4) LOVE IS A COLLABORATIVE WORK OF ART**

- a. Love is work.
- b. Love is active.
- c. Love requires cooperation.
- d. Love requires dedication.
- e. Love requires compromise.
- f. Love requires a discipline.
- g. Love involves shared responsibility.
- .....

(Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 140)

This metaphor makes our experiences of love coherent---it makes sense of them and produces many entailments. It gives prominence to the active side of love: cooperation, shared responsibility, creativity, etc. on the basis of which this metaphor provides an organization of important love experience that our conventional conceptual system does not make available.

Since we have known the significant functions of metaphor, and then appears another question related to this point: How do metaphors realize these functions? We'll analysis the working mechanism of metaphor in next section.

### **2.3 Working mechanism of conceptual metaphor**

The key notion in seeing metaphor as cognitive is the recognition that in metaphor two concepts are operative simultaneously. The Interaction theory has explained that metaphorical meaning results form an interaction between two ideas. But in what way, on what ground they interact remain unclear. According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphor is viewed as a mapping across conceptual domains---namely, the source domain and the target domain. The term mapping refers to the directional interaction between the two domains. Take metaphor LIFE IS JOURNEY as an example. The source concept we try to understand (LIFE) is called the target domain, and the concept that is used for this purpose (JOUENEY) is called the source domain. We use the structure from our everyday concept of journey to organize our everyday concept of life, as we say:

#### **(5) LIFE IS JOURNEY**

- a. She went through life with a good heart.
- b. He knows where he is going in life.
- c. I don't know which path to take.
- d. He overcame the difficulties in life.
- e. Then he came to a point in his life where he had to make a difficult decision.
- f. He seemed to get into the dead end of the life.

Lakoff and Turner (1989:63) argued that every metaphorical mapping included the following process:

Vacancies in target domain are created through mapping process. For example, the mapping of the vacancy *journey* onto the domain of life means regarding all kinds of events in one's life as the points constituting the life road, which thus makes us create the vacancy *life road* in the domain of life.

The relationship in source domain is mapped onto the one in target domain. For example, a traveler has reached his or her destination, which can be mapped onto the situation that a person has achieved his or her goal in life. Hence, the relationship between *traveler* and *reaching his or her destination* in source domain becomes the one between a person and *achieving his goal in life*, after it is mapped onto the target domain.

The features in source domain are mapped onto the ones in target domain. In example (5) d, the merits and demerits of a traveler, which may effect his traveling pattern and the like, are mapped onto a person's advantages and disadvantages of handling problems in life. So, that a person is able to overcome the difficulties in journey, often means metaphorically that he can overcome the difficulties in life.

Knowledge in source domain is mapped onto that in target domain. Our knowledge about a domain may enable us to make inferences from it. When a domain is used as the source domain of metaphorical mapping, the inference pattern in it will also be mapped onto the target domain. In (5) f, when we walk into a dead end, it implies that we cannot go any further and must choose another way. Similarly, when we talk about that a person gets into the dead end of life, it also means that he must take another choice.

As we have seen, conceptual metaphor is a cross-domain mapping from the source domain to the target domain on the basis of image schemas. Then, is this mapping arbitrary? It is evident the answer is negative. The mapping process follows certain principles: **Invariance Principles** and **Target Domain Overrides**. Lakoff and Turner (1989) proposed the Invariance Principle as the general constraint on metaphorical mapping, which states, "Metaphorical mappings preserve the cognitive topology (that is, the image-schema structure) of the source domain, in a way consistent with the inherent structure of the target domain" (Lakoff, 1993). What the

Invariance Principle does is to guarantee that, for container schemas, the source domain interiors will be mapped onto the target domain interiors, source domain exteriors onto target domain exteriors, and source domain boundaries onto target domain boundaries; for path-schemas, source domain starting points will be mapped onto target domain starting points, source domain ending points onto target domain ending points, source domain trajectories onto target domain trajectories. One cannot find cases where a source domain interior is mapped onto a target domain exterior, or where a source domain exterior is mapped onto a target domain path. Therefore, a corollary of the Invariance Principle leads to another principle: Target Domain Overrides, which states that image-schematic structure inherent in the target domain cannot be violated and inherent target domain structure limits the possibilities for mappings automatically. For example, in THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS metaphor, only foundation and structure of the building is mapped, but the roof, window or door of the building is not mapped onto theory only because there is no correspondence in the target domain.

## **2.4 Classification of conceptual metaphor**

In Lakoff and Johnson's point of view, conceptual metaphors can generally be divided into three main types: structural metaphors, orientational metaphors and ontological metaphors.

### **2.4.1 Structural metaphor**

Structural metaphors refer to metaphors in which one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another. We always use one highly structured and clearly delineated concept to structure another. The structure of concept keeps the same in the process of mapping. As an illustration, let's apply the theory to the actual analysis of a metaphor. The concept ARGUMENT includes four main elements: ARGUMENT IS JOURNEY, ARGUMENT IS WAR, ARGUMENT IS CONTAINER, ARGUMENTS ARE BUILDINGS. They highlight some aspects of ARGUMENT respectively: the metaphor ARGUMENT IS JOURNEY emphasizes the process; the metaphor

ARGUMENT IS WAR shows the method and the result of ARGUMENT; the metaphor ARGUMENT IS CONTAINER pays attention to its content while the metaphor ARGUMENTS ARE BUILDINGS shows the quality. The four main elements themselves can be regarded as structural metaphors. For example, in the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, we can find elements of a war correspond to these of an argument: (a) initial positions of both sides; (b) attack each other; (c) defend himself; (d) withdraw; (e) counterattack; (f) win or lose; (g) cease fire. The metaphor came into being by a method of structural mapping. That is to say, the structure of the source domain WAR is mapped onto the target domain ARGUMENT. So the concept ARGUMENT is metaphorically structured in terms of the concept WAR and the metaphor is reflected in our everyday language by a wide variety of expressions:

#### (6) ARGUMENT IS WAR

His arguments are indefensible.

Your criticisms were right on target.

You will never win an argument with him.

他的论点不攻自破。

你的批评一语中的。

你永远争不过他。

It is important to see that words and expressions that are used to talk about war can be used to talk about argument. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his position and defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies. Many of the things we do in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war. Though there is no physical battle, there is a verbal battle, which is reflected by the structure of an argument---attack, defense, counterattack, etc. Argument and war are different kinds of things---verbal discourse and armed conflict---and the actions performed are different kinds of actions. But ARGUMENT is partially structured, understood, performed and talked about in terms of WAR. "The point here is that not only our conception of an argument but the way we carry it out is grounded in our knowledge and experience of physical combat. Even if you have never fought a fistfight in your life, much less a war, but have been arguing from the time you began

to talk. You still conceive of arguments and execute them according to the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor because the metaphor is built into the conceptual system of the culture in which you live”(Lakoff&Johnson, 1980: 63-64). Thus a conclusion can be easily reached that we often use structures of concrete concepts to conceptualize abstract phenomena; the understanding of abstract concepts is dependent on concrete ones.

#### **2.4.2 Orientational metaphor**

There is a kind of metaphorical concept that organizes a whole system of concepts with respect to one another. We will call these orientational metaphors (Lakoff&Johnson, 1980:14). Orientational metaphors are also called spatialization metaphors since most of them result from our perception of space: up-down, in-out, front-back, on-off, deep-shallow, central-peripheral. These spatial orientations are directly grounded in the most basic experience of human being and these experience in sensing orientations can be got early during the growing of an individual. These are proved to be correct in psychology. So it is natural that we use the basic orientation concepts derived from these basic experience to understand more abstract concepts such as emotions, health condition, quantity and social status, etc. Orientational metaphors give a concept a spatial orientation, for example, HAPPY IS UP. We can find a wide variety of expressions of it in our everyday language:

##### **(7) HAPPY IS UP**

- a. I'm feeling up.
- b. He was in high spirits.
- c. Thinking about her always gives me a lift.
- d.他情绪高昂。
- e.他今天处于低靡状态。
- f.他的心情沉到了谷底。

There are other such orientational metaphors as SAD IS DOWN; CONSCIOUS IS UP, UNCONSCIOUS IS DOWN; MORE IS UP, LESS IS DOWN; HIGH STATUS IS UP, LOW STATUS IS DOWN; RATIONAL IS UP, EMOTIONAL IS DOWN.

(Lakoff&Johnson, 1980:17) Such metaphorical orientations are not arbitrary. In actually we feel that no metaphor can ever be comprehended or even adequately represented independently of its experiential basis (Lakoff&Johnson, 1980:19). There are two bases: one is common physical experience of human being which can explain why such metaphors are almost the same in a great number of languages; the other is the cultural experience in a certain society. So expressions of such metaphors vary from culture to culture.

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the physical and social bases of the above metaphors can be as the following: (a) Drooping posture typically goes along with sadness and depression, erect posture with a positive emotional state; (b) Human and most other mammals sleep lying down and stand up when they awaken; (c) If you add more of a substance or of physical objects to a container or pile, the level goes up; (d) Status correlated with (social) power and (physical) power is up; (e) In west, people view themselves as being in control over animals, plants and their physical environment, and it is their unique ability to reason that places human beings above other animals and gives them this control. CONTROL IS UP thus provides a basis for MAN IS UP and therefore for RATIONAL IS UP.

Thus a conclusion can be easily reached that most of our fundamental concepts are organized in terms of one or more spatialization metaphors. There is an internal systematicity to each spatialization metaphor and an overall external systematicity among the various spatialization metaphors. For example, "GOOD IS UP gives an up orientation to general well-being, and this orientation is coherent with special cases like HAPPY IS UP, HEALTH IS UP, ALIVE IS UP, CONTROL IS UP, etc. and in some cases, spatialization is so essential a part of a concept that it is difficult for us to imagine any alternative metaphor that might structure the concept" (ibid: 18). Just as "high status" in our society, we couldn't imagine to use any concepts to structure STATUS except HIGH and LOW both in English and Chinese.

### **2.4.3 Ontological metaphor**

Just as the basic experience of human spatial orientations give rise to



orientational metaphors, our experience with physical objects (especially our own bodies) provide the basis for an extraordinarily wide variety of ontological metaphors, that is, ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc. as entities and substances. Just because we treat these abstract, intangible concepts as concrete, tangible entities, we can refer to them, categorize them, group them, and qualify them—and, by this means, reason about them.

According to Lakoff and Johnson, ontological metaphors can be further subcategorized into entity and substance metaphor, container metaphor and personification.

#### **2.4.3.1 Entity metaphor**

Entity metaphor, just as the name implies, refers to metaphor in which abstract concept are identified as visible, tangible entity. As a result, words denoting concrete, tangible objects are applied to abstract, intangible notions: For instance, we often say: “This status is very fragile.” But at the same time, *fragile* can be applied to modify mind. The sentence *Her ego is very fragile* is also acceptable; in which mind has been thought of as something concrete like a statue. The experience of rising prices can be metaphorically viewed as an entity via the noun inflation. Thus, we have the entity metaphor INFLATION IS AN ENTITY that is reflected in following expressions:

##### **(8)INFLATION IS AN ENTITY**

- a. Inflation is lowering our standard of living.
- b. If there’s much more inflation, we’ll never survive.
- c. We need combat inflation.
- d. Inflation is backing us into a corner.
- e. Inflation is taking its toll at the checkout counter and the gas pump.
- f. Buying land is the best way of dealing with inflation.
- g. Inflation makes me sick. (Lakoff&Johnson, 1980:26)

In these cases, inflation is comprehended in terms of a concrete object—an entity. So inflation can do good or bad to us just as a living thing.

### **2.4.3.2 Container metaphor**

The most typical and representative example of ontological metaphor is container metaphor. “We are physical beings, bounded and set off from the rest of the world by the surface of our skins and we experience the rest of the world as outside us. Each of us is a container with a bounding surface and in-out orientation”(ibid: 29). Thus we form container metaphor in our mind. Its structural elements are an interior, an exterior and a boundary with in-out orientations. We project our own in-out orientation onto other physical objects with boundaries like a room; onto solid objects like a rock; onto natural environment like woods; onto substances like water; even onto some abstract entities like man’s visual field. So, we can say: to move out of a room and into another; break a rock to see what’s inside; walk in the woods; jump into the water; come into view. Moreover, we use container metaphors to comprehend events, actions, activities and states. “Events and actions are conceptualized metaphorically as objects, activities as substances, states as containers” (ibid: 30). Look at the following examples:

- (9) a. Are you in the race on Sunday? (race as CONTAINER OBJECT)
- b. He’s out of the race now. (race as CONTAINER OBJECT)
- c. How did Jerry get out of washing the windows? (washing as CONTAINER)
- d. I put a lot of energy into washing the windows. (washing as CONTAINER)

### **2.4.3.3 Personification**

Personification is to treat a thing or an idea as if it were human or had human qualities. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argued that personification was perhaps the most obvious ontological metaphor because it allowed us to comprehend a wide variety of experience with nonhuman entities in terms of human motivations, characteristics, and activities. It is well acknowledged that humans tend to describe the inanimate aspects of the world through metaphoric reference to the human body. Here are some examples:

(10) a. Life has cheated me.

b. Cancer finally caught up with him.

c. Our biggest enemy right now is inflation.

d. The handsome houses on the street to the college were not fully awake,  
but they looked very friendly.

In these cases, *life*, *cancer*, *inflation*, *houses* are described as human and endowed with human activities and emotions.

## **Chapter Three Plant metaphors in English and Chinese**

As pointed out by the modern cognitive linguists, “metaphors are not just a way of expressing ideas by means of language, but a way of thinking about things”(Ungerer& Schmid, 2001:118). Metaphor is a mapping or projecting from concrete, tangible concepts to abstract, intangible concepts and through which, human beings structuralize concepts and know about the world around them.

“The grounding of metaphors is our basic experiences”. (Ungerer& Schmid, 2001:126) Human beings know about the outside world with the maxim of “近取诸身，远取诸物”. Human being understands or measures unknown objects according to the familiar ones. As a kind of conceptual metaphor, plant metaphor is also based on our basic physical experience.

### **3.1 Cognition of plant metaphorization**

Being an important part of ecosystem, plant interacts with the around world all the time and can not separate from it. China and Britain are both agricultural countries in the history. Plants have countless ties with human beings' lives and there are large numbers of plant metaphors in English and Chinese.

Lakoff and Turner (1989) put forward the concept of the Great Chain of Being. The basic Great Chain is defined by attributes and behaviours, arranged in a hierarchy. The extended version of The Great Cain of Being, employed in axiological semantics, can be represented schematically in the following manner (Krzeszowski, 1997: 68):

GOD

HUMANS

ANIMALS

PLANTS

INORGANIC THINGS

Given the five levels of the Great Chain, and the two possible directions of mapping, i.e. upward and downward, the number of all possible metaphors coherent

with the Great Chain is altogether twenty (Krzyszowski, 1997: 161)). Ten of these metaphors involve upward mapping, in which the source domain occupies a lower position on the Great Chain than the target domain. The other ten involve downward mapping, in which the source domain occupies a higher position on the Great Chain than the target domain. Krzyszowski (1997: 161) formulates the following set of metaphors: 1. GOD IS A HUMAN BEING; 2. GOD IS AN ANIMAL; 3. GOD IS A PLANT; 4. GOD IS A THING; 5. A HUMAN BEING IS AN ANIMAL; 6. A HUMAN BEING IS A PLANT; 7. A HUMAN BEING IS A THING; 8. AN ANIMAL IS A PLANT; 9. AN ANIMAL IS A THING; 10. A PLANT IS A THING; 11. A THING IS A PLANT; 12. A THING IS AN ANIMAL; 13. A THING IS A HUMAN BEING; 14. A THING IS (A) GOD; 15. A PLANT IS AN ANIMAL; 16. A PLANT IS A HUMAN BEING; 17. A PLANT IS (A) GOD; 18. AN ANIMAL IS A HUMAN BEING; 19. AN ANIMAL IS (A) GOD; 20. A HUMAN BEING IS (A) GOD.

In this thesis, we'll discuss three particular metaphors, namely A PLANT IS A HUMAN BEING, A PLANT IS (A) GOD and A PLANT IS A THING.

### **3.1.1 Working mechanism of plant metaphor**

Plants are essential to human beings; food, clothes, houses and vehicles all come directly or indirectly from plants. Coexisting with human beings, plants are friends and a "mirror" of human beings. All the merits and demerits of human beings can be found in plants. It is natural thing for human being to find similarities between plants and themselves. Lakoff and Turner (1989: 172) point out that Great Chain of Being Metaphor is "... a tool of great power and scope because ...because it allows us to comprehend general human character traits in terms of well-understood nonhuman attributes...". A PLANT IS A HUMAN BEING is a typical conceptual metaphor. Based on this conceptual metaphor, lots of metaphorical expressions are created, such as "a white lily" (beautiful and innocent young girl), "couch potato" (person watching TV for a long time in sofa), "apple of one's eye" (a pearl in the palm), "He is mature", etc. In fact, all these plant metaphors are based on the same conceptual metaphor, A PLANT IS A HUMAN BEING.

Human beings understand or measure unknown objects according to the familiar ones, and there is a counterpart in Chinese “近取诸身，远取诸物”. These sayings discovered a fundamental principle of recognizing and describing objects of our ancestors. Man gets concepts of familiar objects first, and then understands the outside objects which have similarities with those familiar objects as a further step. Plants are undoubtedly familiar objects to human being, so it is natural for human being to employ words which denoting these concepts of plants to refer to those unknown and abstract objects. A PLANT IS A THING is another basic conceptual metaphor. It produces lots of metaphorical expressions both in English and Chinese. For example: “花” is the most beautiful part of a plant and man is very familiar with this part of plant. Then he employs the word to refer to the most beautiful girl in a school, so “校花” comes into being. Lastly, the word is used to express an abstract concept “文艺之花” which means the finest of one’s cause. Such a process of cognition conforms to the objective law that man always reorganize all the objects outside them in such an order as from objects near to them to ones far away from them; from entity to non-entity; from concrete ones to abstract ones; from simple ones to complicated ones (Lu Weizhong, 2003). After human being knows about plants, he maps the results of his cognition to other things in order to recognize and understand them.

The process of plant metaphorization is that human being use concepts of plants that are formed during man’s recognition to recognize other outside things as well as human beings. Undoubtedly, plant metaphor belongs to the ontological metaphor. They are pervasive in our daily life and have been conventionalized into lexicon. Their formations are inevitable results of the interaction between cognitive thinking and physical activities of human being.

### **3.1.2 Prerequisites of plant metaphor**

Nunberg in 1978 claimed that his pragmatic functional theory could be used to analyze indirect demonstrative phenomenon. He argues that, for the reason of psychology, culture, or partial pragmatic, people would set up a certain correlation between objects of different nature. With this kind of connection, an object can be

named by another object.

Plant metaphors in English and Chinese are formed on the basis of the following features:

### 3.1.2.1 Same ground for plant's appearance or growing habit

Hu Wenzhong points out that language is a mirror of national culture, so people usually consider it as a vehicle which can be easily accepted by their own nation. Specifically, if and only if plant's appearance or growing habits acquire wide-range of acceptance in a speech community or among communicative anticipates, this plant metaphor can be accepted. For instance,

(11) She is a virgin, a most unspotted lily.

In this example, people use "lily" to refer to "a pure and unsophisticated girl", because clear white lily is the most beautiful. Lily-white is often used to describe an unspotted thing or a pure girl based on the similarity in appearance.

### 3.1.2.2 Distinctive features of a plant

Metaphor is used to make known objects which have distinctive features took place of unknown object. By this cognitive function of metaphor, people can well understand new objects or conceptions. So plant metaphor must draw supports from plant's distinctive features. Otherwise, it may find difficulty in acceptance. Examples are as follows,

(12) Learners are ears of wheat: so long as they are empty they stand straight raising their head high; when they are nearly ripe, containing full grains, they lower their heads in modesty, showing no pride. (Qing Run, 2005)

(13) 哑巴吃黄连 — 有苦说不出。

In (12), the metaphorical meaning of "ears of wheat" is explained clearly in the following part of the sentence. In (13), it is common sense that coptis is extremely bitter. Here it refers to the pains, grievances or bitter experiences that one suffers. In these two examples, the plant metaphor is formed on the basis of the distinctive features of the plants.

### **3.1.2.3 Similarities between two domains**

According to Zhao Yanfang (2001), “anything resembles everything else in some way”. For example, “grass-roots” has the metaphorical meaning as “of the mass, the general public, the common people”, because grass is common to see everywhere. “昙花” usually flowers for a very short time in midnight, so it is used to describe glory or a favorable situation that last briefly.

Although it is safe to say that “anything resembles everything else in some way” (ibid.), speakers or hearers must find that ‘way’— similarities to construct a metaphor. In a sense, metaphor is a partial shift of semantic features based on similarities. Additionally, similarity is a complex concept which can refer to either objective similarity or subjective one and can also be affected by cognitive factors. So different people may find different similarities even for the same thing, that is, different people may have different accessible contextual assumptions. However, similarities between two domains do exist.

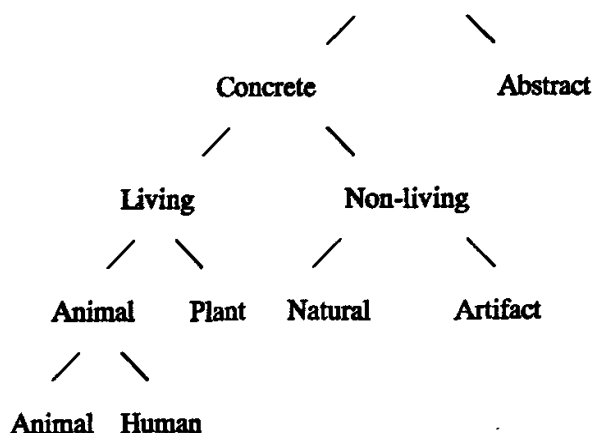
## **3.2 Mapping models**

### **3.2.1 Nominal plant metaphors in English and Chinese.**

#### **3.2.1.1 A PLANT IS A HUMAN BEING metaphor (from plant domain to human domain)**

Coexisting with human beings, plants are friends and a “mirror” of human beings. Human being raise crops for food, grow flowers for appreciation, do the planting in botanic gardens for display and enjoyment, and protect plants for natural balance. In a word, human beings keep an intimate and frequent contact with plants. All the merits and demerits of human beings can be found in plants. This kind of close relationship can also be showed by the following diagram of similarity level (Shu Dingfang, 2000:177).





**Figure 1 A Diagram of Similarity Level**

In the above diagram, a conclusion can be safely drawn that Animal has closest ties with Human. The next category is Plant. Plant and Human have many characteristics in common and resembles each other in many ways. To simplify, when we use plant terms to express something metaphorically, human domain is frequent to resort. In A PLANT IS A HUMAN BEING metaphor, the attributes of plants in the source domain are mapped onto the attributes of human beings in the target domain.

### **3.2.1.1.1 Domain of physical characteristics and appearances**

As to the conceptual metaphor A PLANT IS A HUMAN BEING, plant metaphors in English and Chinese can denote many aspects of human beings as physical appearances, characters, moralities, behaviors so on and so forth. According to Shu Dingfang, in ancient times, the coinage of Chinese characters kept to the law of discovering similarities between objects of different kinds. For example, beautiful women are assimilated to flowers, and vice versa. This kind of comparison puts graceful female carriage on the natural object. This shows that the ancients have discovered there are connections even identifications between objects of different kinds. (Shu Dingfang 2000: 94) .

Physical appearances and facial expressions of human beings are distinct features that can be observed easily. People cost least effort by achieving greatest contextual effects in finding out some “resemblances” on appearance between plants and human beings. Most of these metaphors are so natural, so pervasive in our thought and action

that sometimes, people are unaware of their metaphoricality and accept them as self-evident and direct descriptions of human beings. Chinese tend to compare flowers to appearances and carriages of women. Beautiful ladies are likened to the noble peony, the erect lotus, the simple pear blossom, the bright-colored peach blossom and so on. The following is the description of Du Shi niang in *Stories to Warn Men* (《警世通言》), “两弯眉似远山青,一泓清潭秋水润,面似桃花,齿如排玉”. In *A Dream of the Red Mansions* (《红楼梦》), Bao Chai is described as the elegant peony; Dai Yu the lotus, Li Wan the plum blossom. As to the hero, Bao Yu, the description is as follows, “面若中秋之月,色如春晓之花,鬓若刀裁,眉如墨画,颜如桃瓣,目若秋波”.

More examples in Chinese are as follows, “杏脸桃腮”, “人面桃花”, “芙蓉面”, “柳叶眉”, “梨花一枝春带雨”. “花枝招展” “花容月貌”, “瓜子脸”, “柳眉杏眼”, “杨柳细腰”, “柳姿”, “樱桃小嘴”, “桃腮”, “小白菜”, “柳眉倒竖”, “蒜头鼻子”, “豆芽菜”, “芦柴棒”, “矮冬瓜”, “小萝卜头”, etc. (*Modern Chinese Dictionary*, 1999; *Practical Chinese Dictionary*, 2000)

(14) 樱桃樊素口, 杨柳小留腰。(白居易, 《杨柳枝》)

(15) 一杯竹叶穿肠过, 两片桃花脸上来。(cited from Zhang Ande, Yang Yuangang, 2002)

(16) 桃之夭夭,灼灼其华。之子于归,宜其室家。

桃之夭夭,有其实。之子于归,宜其家室。

桃之夭夭,其叶蓁蓁。之子于归,宜其家人。(《诗经·周南·桃夭》)

(17) 启齿呈编目, 弹丝动削葱。(cited from Zhang Ande, Yang Yuangang, 2002)

In (14), “樱桃” denotes the lady’s little mouth, “杨柳” denoted woman’s waist. In (15), “桃花” here refers to the flushing of cheeks. In (16), “桃” here refers to a pretty bride. The pride here is described metaphorically as bright-colored peach blossom, which expresses the meaning of luckiness, wealth and honor. In (17), “削葱” refers to the lady’s slim fingers.

In English, similar examples are as follows: “rose-lipped”, “peachy cheeks”, “a white lily”, “an orchidaceous lady”(a woman of dazzling beauty), “peaches and cream”(white touched with red in color, exquisite and clean in quality), “a willowy woman”, “my lady’s lily hand”, etc. (*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

(18)She has an erect carriage and a willowy walk.

(19)She may have contrived to keep her peaches and cream complexion.  
(*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

There are still more examples in English, such as “Adam’s apple” (larynx), “apple” (eyeball), “strawberry”(brandy nose), “banana” (big nose), “potato-trap”(mouth), “melon” (protrudent stomach), “coconut”, “potato”, “pumpkin”, “onion” and “bean” (head), etc. (*English-Chinese Dictionary*,2003)

(20) Bernie has a big Adam’s apple. (cited from Zhu E, 2005)

(21)Whistling at a crook is not useful as to crack him on the bean with a hard stick.

(22)The little boy is scared by his big strawberry.

(23)He is a young man with a banana, a big mouth and a pair of black eyes.

(*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

Both in English and Chinese, people tend to use plant metaphors denoting the human physical appearances. Due to the close relationship between plants and human beings, it is no difficult to match the appearances of plants with that of human beings. From the above examples, we can find that human beings’ physical appearances are often described and conceptualized with plants both in English and Chinese on the basis of the similarities in outside appearances between plants and human beings. English and Chinese share the conceptual metaphor A PLANT IS A HUMAN BEING.

### 3.2.1.1.2 Domain of a species of people

To describe the common features of a species of people, plant terms are good choices to be used as reconceptualization. Both in English and Chinese, there are large numbers of plant metaphors of this type.

Such plant metaphors are rich in Chinese, such as “小辣椒”, “墙头草”, “金枝玉叶”, “草包”, “草莽”, “校花”, “交际花”, “花旦”, “菊坛”, “杏坛”, “桃李芬芳”, “兰孙桂子”, “兰桂”, “根苗”, “梨园子弟”, “根苗”, “儒林”, “艺林”, “杏林”etc. (*Modern Chinese Dictionary*, 1999; *Practical Chinese Dictionary*, 2000)

(24)五步之内，必有芳兰。(cited from Zhang Ande, Yang Yuangang, 2002)

“芳兰” refers to “talent”

(25)但儿孙之贤否，或不能遥必耳，然而兰孙桂子，往往萃于德门。（清怀西居士周安士著述）

“兰孙桂子” refers to the disciples

(26)通省梨园子弟各班愿与者，书名画知，届时齐集湖亭，各演杂剧。（吴敬梓，《儒林外史》）

“梨园” refers to “traditional opera community”

(27)我们今天是桃李芬芳，明天是社会的栋梁。

“桃李” refers to “pupils”

(28)腹中贮书一万卷，不肯低头在草莽。（李颀，《送陈章甫》）

“草莽” refers to “people of commoner status who haven’t fetched the scholarly honor or official rank”

(29)嫂又金枝玉叶，吹股风都要生病。（沙汀，《一个秋天的晚上》）

“金枝玉叶” refers to “person, usually weak and namby-pamby, born in noble or rich family”

In English, “potato head”, “tomato”, “rose bud”, “a white lily”, “peach” and “cabbage” often symbolize young and charming girls. “Apple polisher” symbolizes sycophant, originating from the habit that the pupils give apple to their teacher as present. “Apple of one’s eye” refers to a pearl in the palm, which originates from the sentence “keep me as the apple of the eyes, hide me under the shadow of thy wings” in *The Bible*. There are still more examples in English, such as “top banana” (the best comedian); “nut” (fanatical people); “peanuts”, “small potato” (a worm, nobody); “a tough nut”, “hot potato” (indomitable person, people difficult to deal with); “the (clean) potato” (upright people); “not quite the clean potato” (people of doubtful aspect); “vegetable” (gork); “couch potato” (person watching TV for a long time in sofa); “sucked/ squeezed orange” (people who is fully utilized but needed no longer); “lemon” (awkward people); “some pumpkins” (big shot, VIP); “peach” (a nice colleague); “grass roots” (people of basic/ primary level); “a tough onion”, “a heart of oak” (brave and resolute people); “carrot top” (people with red hair); “banana” (people with yellow-color skin but totally westernized ideas and thought);

“lotus-eater” (people passing days in indolence, gather life’s roses) ,  
“wheat”(countryman), “pumpkin” (head of village), “a smooth apple”(favorable man),  
“a wise apple” (arrogant young man), “morning glory”(false  
alarm)etc.(*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

(30) Many retirees are couch potatoes who like popping cold beers and relaxing in  
front of their \$2500 wide-screen, high definition television set. (cited from Zhu E,  
2006)

(31)All of us don’t like him, because he is an apple polisher.

(32) I won’t deny that that her father is some pumpkins.

(33)After working twenty years for the company, Alex was discarded. What a  
squeezed orange!

(34)I’m going to look a lemon, aren’t I?

(35)He was a good peach to work with in company.

(36)She was a lotus-eater for her aim was to gather life’s roses whilst she might

(37)He had long known subconsciously that his father was not the clean potato.

(38) He was a brilliant student as a fresh, but turned to be only a morning glory.

(*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

From the above mentioned data, we can find that there are large numbers of such  
plant metaphors both in English and Chinese. People have the tendency of describing  
common features of a species of people with plants based on their exterior features or  
growing habits. As we have discussed ahead, metaphor is more than a figure of speech;  
it is a cognitive faculty by which humans think, know and process the events of the  
world. Our conceptual system is largely metaphorical by mapping concrete domains  
onto abstract domains. Here, the common features of a species of people are  
conceptualized by the exterior features or growing habits of plants. But it is  
noteworthy that the plant words employed in this type of metaphors are quite different  
in the two languages. Chinese has a tendency to use more flowers and trees, while  
English tends to use vegetables and fruits.

### 3.2.1.1.3 Domain of characters and moralities

Plants, with their delicate relation with human beings, provide rich basis for conceptualizing human beings' characters and moralities. Besides human beings' physical appearances, their characters and moralities can also serve as the target domain:

In Chinese, plant terms are frequently used to denote characters and moralities of human beings. In Chinese culture, flowers and trees are often impersonated and have already become the symbol of human personalities. The poets chant the praise of human beings' characters and moralities by paying tributes to flowers and trees. For example, “梅”(plum blossom), “兰”(orchid), “竹”(bamboo), “菊”(chrysanthemum) are considered as “four gentlemen” in plants in Chinese for they have such common qualities as persistence, integrity and showing indifference to fame and wealth. “梅”(plum blossom) is used to refer to the good quality of elegance, purity and resolution. The poet, Lin Hejing, in Song Dynasty, once dwelled in seclusion in a mountain near Hangzhou city. His taking plum as wife, crane as child had been widely and eternally praised. With slight delicate fragrance, “兰”(orchid) usually grows in glens or among the mountain rocks where people seldom reach. As a result, orchid is used frequently to denote the virtuousness. In *A Dream of the Red Mansions*, Miao Yu is described as beautiful as orchid both in shape and character. The great poet Qu Yuan also had special feeling with orchid. He expressed his bosom and aspiration by chanting praise of the orchid. “竹”(bamboo) is usually tall, straight, evergreen and stiff, so it refers to the quality of uprightness, honesty, and integrity. As to “菊”(chrysanthemum), the great Chinese idyllist Tao Yuanming in Dong Jin Dynasty had an indissoluble bound with chrysanthemum. He had created lots of poems singing highly of chrysanthemum. To him, chrysanthemum is the incarnation of his own personality. Chrysanthemum is cold-resistant, fragrant, elegant and graceful, so it is connected with the noble character of being persistent, tranquil and satisfied without seeking for fame and gain. Besides, there are other plants that are frequently used to denote characters and moralities, such as “松”(pine) and “荷”(lotus). “松”(pine) is evergreen even if it lives on barren land. Therefore, pine is used to denote the hero

characters of firmness, uprightness and persistence. Neither riches nor honors can corrupt them; neither poverty nor humbleness can make them swerve from principle; neither threats nor forces can subdue them. “荷”(lotus) in Chinese is the symbol of purity. There are large numbers of literary works glorifying lotus. For example, Li Bai praises the flawless purity of lotus with a famous poem “清水出芙蓉,天然去雕饰”. Besides, lotus is also the symbol of incorruptness. Zhou Dunyi in Song Dynasty once described the lotus as “出污泥而不染”. “花”(flower) in Chinese is frequently assimilated to woman’s destiny for the prosperity time of both woman and flower is short. Being delicate, flower cannot stand the adverse weather; being effeminate, women are often unable to withstand the hardships of life. So people either praise or bemoan women with flowers. For example, Li Qingzhao, a famous female poet in Southern Song Dynasty once wrote “帘卷西风,人比黄花瘦”, “满地黄花堆积,憔悴损,如今有谁堪摘”; Lin Daiyu in *A Dream of the Red Mansions* wrote poems as “明媚鲜妍能几时,一朝飘泊难寻觅”, “一朝春尽红颜老,花落人亡两不知”, etc.. They sighed for the flowers apparently but themselves actually.

(39)咬定青山不放松,立根原在破岩中。千磨万击还坚劲,任尔东西南北风。(郑燮《竹石》)

(40)未曾出土便有节,纵使凌云仍虚心。(郑燮之题《画竹》诗)

(41)雪压竹头低,低下欲沾泥。一轮红日起,依旧与天齐。(方志敏《咏竹》)

(42)风雨送春归,飞雪迎春到。已是悬崖百丈冰,犹有花枝俏。俏也不争春,只把春来报。待到山花烂漫时,她在丛中笑。(毛泽东《卜算子·咏梅》)

(43)无意苦争春,一任群芳妒。零落成泥碾作尘,只有香如故。(陆游《卜算子·咏梅》)

(44)隆冬到来时,百花迹已绝。红梅不屈服,树树立风雪。(陈毅《红梅》)

(45)墙角数枝梅。凌寒独自开。遥知不是雪,为有暗香来。(王安石《梅花》)

(46)宝剑锋从磨砺出,梅花香自苦寒来。(《警世贤文》之勤奋篇)

(47)芝兰生于深林,不以无人而不芳;君子修道立德,不谓穷困而改节。(孔子《孔子家语·在厄》)

(48)金声玉润,蕙心兰质(王勃《七夕》)。

- (49)秋菊能傲霜，风霜重重恶。本性能耐寒，风霜其奈何？(陈毅《秋菊》)
- (50)寒花开已尽，菊蕊独盈枝。(杜甫《云安九日》)
- (51)不是花中偏爱菊，此花开后更无花。(元稹《菊花》)
- (52)芳菊开林耀，青松冠岩列。怀此贞秀姿，卓为霜下杰。(陶渊明《和郭主簿》)
- (53)耐寒唯有东篱菊，金粟初开晓更清。(白居易《咏菊》)
- (54)零落黄金蕊，虽枯不改香。深丛隐孤芳，犹得车清觞。(梅尧臣《残菊》)
- (55)秋菊能傲霜，风霜重重恶。本性能耐寒，风霜其奈何！(陈毅《秋菊》)
- (56)岁寒，然后知松柏之后凋也。(《论语》)
- (57)大雪压青松，青松挺且直。要知松高洁，待到雪化时。(陈毅《青松》)

Compared with Chinese, there are few plant metaphors conceptualizing human characters and moralities in English, for example, “a heart of oak” refers to one who is brave and steadfast. Western people seldom connect plants with human characters and moralities.

We can clearly see from the above descriptions that, Chinese people have a convention to use substances especially plants denoting human characters and moralities. Trees and flowers are given to such metaphorical meanings as human noble characters and moralities. While in English, plants are seldom connected with these things.

#### 3.2.1.1.4 Domain of people's names

Plant terms being used as people's names often imply the good wishes either in physical appearances or moral tendencies. In Chinese, plants terms often used as people's names, to be more specific, flowers for women and trees for men. The examples are as follows:

In Chinese, plants using as surnames are the following, “杨”, “柳”, “花”, “梅”, “林”, “桂”, “桑”, “柏”, “李”, “麦”, “叶”, etc. Flowers being used as girls' names are as follows: “春梅”, “春兰”, “秋菊”, “爱莲”, “苹苹”, “小草”, “灵芝”, “杜鹃”, “小樱”, “海棠”, “丁香”, “芙蓉”, “枫叶”, “石榴”, “桂兰”, “春桃”, “山杏”, “若兰”, etc. By contrast, boys are often named with “松”, “柏”, “桦”, “杨”, “榛”, “榕”, “楠”, “桐”,



“槐”, “椿”, “柳”, “竹” “永青”, etc. While in English, there are only several flower terms used in names, such as “Rose”, “Lily”, “Daisy”, “Daphne”, “Ivy”, “Violet”, “Jasmine”, “Rosemary”, “Blossom”, “Tulip”, etc. Besides, there are grains and fruits used as surnames, such as “Wheat”, “Corn”, “Rice”, “Apple”, “Orange”, “Root”, etc. (Shen Xuezhong, 1995 ).

In Chinese, children's names are always loaded with good wishes of the eldership. Girls being named with flowers also bear some good wishes. For example, being bright and beautiful as flowers, having perseverance just like plum blossoms, etc. On the other hand, trees are often connected with males in China. Being tall and straight, trees can stand atrocious weather, which is very much alike to the courageous, vigorous and healthy images of men. So boys are often named with trees hoping that they would have good qualities that trees have. In English, the several flowers being used as girls' names are also loaded with the meaning of being sweet and bright. But the choices are limited to only several appointed flowers. Besides, there are no boys named with trees.

The above mentioned plant metaphors are based on the conceptual metaphor A PLANTS IS A HUMAN BEING. English and Chinese share in the domains of physical appearances and common features a species of person. Plant metaphors about human moralities and people names are rich in Chinese. Trees and flowers are incarnations of human beings and most of the noble characters are conceptualized with plants. This is a typical feature of Chinese plant metaphors. By contrast, in English, plants are seldom mapped onto the above mentioned domains.

### **3.2.1.2 A PLANT IS (A) GOD metaphor (from plant domain to divine figure domain)**

Under the influence of ancient civilization of Greece and Rome, plants are often connected with gods in English. They are used to symbolize the gods in Greece myths (Gu Xueliang 1994). For example, “laurel” symbolizes Apollo, god of the sun; “lily” symbolizes Juno or the Blessed Virgin Mary; “myrtle” symbolizes Venus, god of love and beauty; “narcissus” and “poppy” symbolizes Ceres, god of grain; “oak”

symbolizes god Jupiter; “cypress” symbolizes Pluto, god of the Hades; “dittany” symbolizes Diana, god of the moon and hunting; “olive” symbolizes Minerva, god of wisdom; “Vine” symbolizes Bacchus, god of wine, etc. These linguistic data reflect that plant metaphors in English are deeply influenced by the Hellenism in English.

Compared with English, plants are seldom used to denote gods and goddesses in Chinese. In ancient Chinese fairy tales, there are some minor flower fairies or old dryads. For example, if a lotus lived for hundreds of years, it would absorb the nimbus from the heaven and earth, and turn into a fairy called the lotus fairy who could take either the human figure or the shape of a lotus, so do the other flowers and trees. In *Journey to the West*, many of the spirits Tang Seng meets are fairies of flowers or dryads of trees, such as “十八公松”(pine), “孤直公”(cypress), “佛石叟”(bamboo). Compared with English, these spirits can not be named as gods or goddesses for they are minor and most of them are evil. They usually play the role of villains in Chinese myths and tales. In English, the plant metaphors about gods acquire wide-range of acceptance in speech communities or among communicative anticipates, while in Chinese, this type of plant metaphors only appears in certain literary works and seldom in our daily conversations.

### **3.2.1.3 A PLANT IS A THING metaphor (from plant domain to non-human domain)**

Not only the human domain can be regarded as target domain, but also non-human things can be expressed by plant terms, which are showed as follows.

#### **3.2.1.3.1 Domain of concrete things**

Concrete objects are pervasive in our daily life, so does plant terms. We can touch them, see them and feel them. Thus it is natural thing to map from plant domain to concrete object domain based on the similarities between them. More subcases are listed as follows:

### 3.2.1.3.1.1 Domain of objects similar in shape, position or function

Metaphor is formed on the basis of discovering or creating similarity between two objects through imagination and association. In English and Chinese, there are lots of plant metaphors formed on the basis of the similarities in shape, position or function.

In English, the examples are as follows: “cauliflower” (a ware of similar shape); “carrot” (tobacco made in the shape of carrot); “pepper-and-salt” (stripe); “strawberry leaf” (coronal ornament of strawberry leaf shape-symbol of nobility rank); “straw” (sucker): “drink lemonade through a straw”; “pomegranate” (adornment of pomegranate shape); “banana seat” (bicycle seat of banana shape); “olive” (fastener of olive shape); “rose” (floriation of rose shape; armorial bearings of rose shape-Britain’s national emblem); “leaf” (thin sheetmetal); “root” (the lower part of an object or the place where it is linked with others): “root of the tail”, “the root of the tongue”, “the root of a finger-nail”; “stem” (the central part of a plant above the ground which support leaf and flower), “the stem of a wine glass”, “the stem of the tobacco pipe”, etc. (*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

(58) The image of Buddha is covered with gold leaf.

(59) The shy boy blushed to the roots of his hair after saying hello to the girl.

(*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

In Chinese, the examples are as follows, “蘑菇云”, “石笋”, “荷包蛋”, “萝卜裤”, “麻花”, “棉桃”, “菌核”, “细胞核”, “原子核”, “耳根”, “舌根”, “墙根”, “刀茎”, “剑茎”, “肉芽”, “百叶窗”, “千叶莲”, “叶片”, “叶轮”, “灯花儿”, “火花”, “雪花”, “霜花”, “烟花”, “泪花”, “油花”, “葱花”, etc. (*Modern Chinese Dictionary*, 1999)

The above examples are plant metaphors based on similarities in shape and position. The following are examples based on similarities in function.

For example, in Chinese, “这孩子是他们家的唯一根苗。” (The child is the only offspring of his family). We all know root multiplies and grows up into plants. Here, the attribute of root’s multiplication is mapped onto the target domain “孩子”(child). Another example is “我们的精神文明建设硕果累累”. In this example, fruit is the

product of plants, so does the effect of cultural and ideological progress. “根不正苗歪” means without a solid foundation, there will be no success. In English, “Her roots are in Scotland where she was born”. In this sentence, root is the part where the plants grow up from, while Scotland is the place where she was born. So the common point is that root is the very place they both grow up. “An inordinate emphasis on irregular forms is the commonest irrelevances of the school grammarian who all too often can’t see the wood for the trees himself and seems determined that nobody else shall”. Here, the trees refer to the details while the wood refers to the overall situation of certain matters. The following are more examples in Chinese and English:

In Chinese, the examples are as follows, “果”(things gained through working or fighting), “果实”, “劳动果实”, “结果”, “成果”, “前因后果”; “枝节”(relevant but less important thing or troubles ), “枝枝节节”, “横生枝节”, “文字枝蔓”; “核”( the center, the major part of something ), “领导核心”, “核心小组”, “核心攻势”, “核心作用”; “根”(the offspring), “根苗”(the beginning, the origin, the family background ), “祸根”, “寻根”, “刨根问底”, “根底”, “根源”, “根由”, “根苗”, “根本”, “根据”, “无根之谈”, “根脚”, “根底”; “花”(the finest of one’s cause), “文艺之花”, “革命之花”, etc. (*Modern Chinese Dictionary*, 1999)

(60)教育孩子珍惜劳动果实, 可以养成孩子勤俭、朴实等良好品质。

(61)我们是老街坊, 彼此都知根知底的。

(62)抓住主要问题, 不要过多的注意那些枝枝节节。

(*Modern Chinese Dictionary*, 1999; *Practical Chinese Dictionary*, 2000)

In English, “stem” (family tree , blood lineage), “descend from an ancient stem”; “leaf” (page), “take a leaf out of the book”(learn from someone), “turn over a new leaf”; “root”(the beginning, the origin, the basis), “the root of the matter”, “root of the contract”, “one’s roots country”; “bud”(the very beginning), “nip in the bud”. (*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

(63)You ought to take a leaf out of your brother’s book, he was never late.

(64)I have been very lazy but I am going to turn over a new leaf and work hard.

(65)Work has a bitter root but sweet fruit.

(66)The love of money is the roots of all evils.

(67) Words are leaves; and where they abound, much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found

(68) Let's nip this problem in the bud before it gets out of hand.

(69) Dreams are the seedling of reality.

(*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

Metaphors based on the direct, simple similarities between plants or plant parts and outside entities in position, shape and function are the results of lower cognitive activities of human beings, but they are the most fundamental cognitive methods during the development of cognition of human beings. After these metaphors being used for many times, their metaphorical meanings have been conventionalized and become the fixed literal meanings of relevant plant words. Such plant metaphors make expressions in a language richer. They are also an important method for human beings to create relevance between different categories of entities. Applying a word to an entity belonging to another category by means of metaphor can simplify the language (Zhao Yanfang, 2001:105).

#### **3.2.1.3.1.2 Domain of ammunition, equipments, sports items and machines**

In English, plants are borrowed to refer to certain ammunition, mechanic equipments, sports items and machines, thus making plant terms achieve multidimensional meanings. Plant metaphors about the above mentioned things are unique in English; there are no such metaphors in Chinese. For example, “apple”(bomb, grenade), “pineapple”(bomb, grenade, light mortar), “grapeshot”(shrapnel), “potato masher”(wood handle grenade), “daisy wheel”(antipersonnel bomb), “bananaseat”(bicycle seat), “willow”(a cricket bat), “onion”(baseball), “daisy cutter”(baseball), “nuts and bolts”(the mechanical part/ the running of machine), “plum”(quarry run stone used for concrete), “grapefruit league”(main baseball league teams carrying out performance competition in spring training, which is named for the match is held in Florida where is abound in orange), “grapevine”(one of the fancy action in skating), “rose”, “a fine-rose can” (spray nozzle), “rose engine”(checkering machine), rhubarb (mowing across the sky), etc. (*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

(70)The plane dropped a few hot apples on them.

(71)He knows nothing about the nuts and bolts of a machine.

(72) He is that flight pilot on a rhubarb.

(*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

### **3.2.1.3.1.3 Domain of money**

Plant metaphors about money are unique in English. In Chinese, there are no such metaphors. For example, “spinach” (money), “potatoes” (money), “cucumber” (one dollar), “a lot of lettuce” (a lot of money), “onion” (money), “cabbage” (paper bill), “pineapples” (unemployment relief payment), “plum” (one hundred thousand pound), “melon” (ill-gotten wealth), “nut” (funds), “bean” (a cent), etc. (*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

(73)The producer has raised the nut to \$400,000.

(74)He broke my beans a little, but I think it was worth it.

(*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

The mappings from plants to the above mentioned two domains, ammunition, equipments, sports items, machines and money are unique in English. There are no such mappings in Chinese.

### **3.2.1.3.2 Domain of abstract things**

There are large numbers of plant metaphors about abstract things in English and Chinese. In our daily life, we are always inclined to understand and experience unfamiliar, intangible, abstract concepts in terms of familiar, tangible, concrete ones. Metaphor is seen as a means by which more abstract and intangible areas of experience can be conceptualized in terms of the familiar and concrete.

#### **3.2.1.3.2.1 From flower domain to domain of appointed sentiments and intentions in English**

The English speaking countries have the convention of presenting flowers to express certain sentiments and intentions. One kind of flower often represents a

special meaning or expresses a certain intention. According to Gu Xueliang (1994), many flowers and trees have their appointed meanings. The combinations of certain flowers and trees also have their given meaning. A systematic “flower language” has formed in English. For example, “single pink” represents pure love; “forget-me-not” represents true love; “lotus” represents love having become estranged; “black poplar” symbolizes courage; “white poplar” symbolizes opportunity; “cedar” symbolizes fidelity; “cactus” symbolizes enthusiasm; “wisteria” symbolizes welcome; “daisy” symbolizes naïve and simple; “daffodil” symbolizes respect and regards; the combination of “red chrysanthemum”, “oakleave”, “fieldlilac” and “water-lily” symbolizes “I love modest, brave and pure soul”, etc.. The English nations often express tender feelings by presenting flowers to each other. For example, when friends misapprehend each other, one side would send hazel to express the hope of reconcile, and the other side would send back a bundle of red geranium expressing comfort, then the barrier between the friends is eliminated. When you fall in love with somebody, sending a red rose would be enough to express your love. If she replies with a Chinese primrose, it means she has accepted your love; if she sends back the striped carnation, it shows her rejection. In English, Chinese primrose symbolizes love while the striped carnation symbolizes refusing. When a friend is in trouble, a bundle of mistletoe and holly expresses the encouragement that if he exercises his wits, he will overcome the difficulty, for mistletoe symbolizes thinking hard and holly symbolizes overcoming the difficulty. From the above mentioned examples, we can see the colorfulness and wide use of “flower language” in English speaking countries.

There is no such convention in Chinese. Along with the frequent intercommunion in economy and culture between Chinese and English speaking countries, Chinese people begin to follow the fashion of sending flowers to family members and friends in recent years. But it is not as popular and pervasive as in English speaking countries.

### **3.2.1.3.2.2 Domain of abstract concepts**

Human beings map the attributes of plants not only onto concrete things, but also

abstract concepts. This demonstrates the development of cognition of human beings: they begin to recognize abstract concepts in the outside world by means of metaphor. The number of conventionalized metaphors of this type is considerable in English and Chinese.

English are rich in plant metaphors about abstract concepts. In English, “willow” arouses sorrow and sadness, symbolizes loss and death. For example, “wear the willow” means failure in love or grief over the passing away of one’s beloved. In Shakespeare’s *Othello*, Tess Desdmona was suspected by her husband. Her singing the song, *the willow*, which was sang by her mother’s maid Barbara when dying, implies that Desdmona will die finally just like Barbara. “Red bean” symbolizes bartering away principles for tiny benefit or forgetting friendship for profit. This is stemmed from Essau’s selling his birthright for some red bean stew. In English, the metaphorical meaning of the “lotus” is deeply affected by the Hellenist; it is a fruit of forgetting worries. People will forget all the worries and sorrows after eating it. For example, “lotus-eater” means an irresponsible person who craves for ease and comfort; “lotus land” refers to the fancied land.

The following examples appear in our daily life frequently: “carrot” (benefit being attractive but difficult to get), “feel one’s oats” (state of being elated, having an unduly high opinion of oneself), “know one’s oats” (well-informed), “know one’s onions”(well-informed, capable of doing something), “off one’s onions” (of abnormal consciousness), “the (clean) potato”(correct thing), “eat the leek” (silently endure humiliation and insult), “give somebody beans”(scolding somebody), “not worth a leek”(worthless), “straw”( trivial matter, worthless thing), “draw the straws”(draw lots), “fig”(trivial matter, worthless thing), “peach”(good thing), “a peach of room”, “plum”(best thing , windfall), “lemon”(substandard product), “olive branch”(peace or reconciliation), “grapevine( the secret source or spreading approach of rumor, secret, inside news, etc.), “daisy chain”(a series of things having inner link), “rose”(happiness, easy job, perfection), “under the rose”(private), “gain/win one’s laurels” (winning honor), “look to one’s laurels” (keeping one’s honor very carefully), “rest on one’s laurels”(immersing in the past honor without making more progress),



etc..(*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

(75)A daisy chain of anecdotes introduces the reminiscences.

(76)The future is a carrot on a stick, always just beyond your grasp.

(77)He really knows his oats where skiing is concerned.

(78)The author is a little pretentious, but on the whole he does know his onions.

(79)He is practically off his onions about her.

(80)It's not quite the clean potato.

(81)Their offer isn't worth a straw.

(82)He doesn't care a fig for your opinion.

(83)I don't give a fig for what other people think of me.

(84)What a peach of a room!

(85)He has picked up some of his finest plums.

(86)I will buy the car whether it is a good one or a lemon.

(87)The sudden appearance in these circumstances of Chamberlain with the olive branch in his mouth added piquancy to the scene.

(88) He is our grapevine telegraph.

(89)Her aim was to gather life's roses whilst she might.

(90)He told me the whole truth under the rose.

(*English-Chinese Dictionary*,2003; *Longman Contemporary English-Chinese Dictionary*, 1996)

In Chinese, “柳”(willow) is always connected with sorrow of parting. In China, there is the convention of breaking willows when parting. We can find such descriptions as the following, “汉世凡出函、潼，必自灞陵始，故赠行者于此折柳相送”(程大昌,《雍录》); “萧声咽，秦娥梦断秦楼月。秦楼月，年年柳色，灞陵伤别”(李白《忆秦娥》). “清江一曲柳千条，二十年前旧板桥。曾与美人桥上别，恨无消息到今朝”(刘禹锡《柳枝词》). From the above poems, we can find that willow is the symbol of parting and lovesickness in Chinese traditional culture. “红豆”(red bean) symbolizes love and missing, which originates from the poem *Lovesick* by the great poet Wang Wei in Tang Dynasty, “红豆生南国，春来发几枝。愿君多采

瓣，此物最相思”。In *A Dream of the Red Mansions*, there is also a poem on it, “滴不尽相思血泪抛红豆，开不完春花春柳满画楼”。Here, “红豆”refers to the tears of the lovers when parting. “桃”(peach) is used to denote not only beauty in Chinese, but some other concepts such as “蟠桃献寿”(longevity) and “桃园结义”(personal loyalty). “松”(pine) is usually used to symbolize the characters and moralities of human beings as we have discussed in 3.2.1.1.3. In Chinese culture, it has other metaphorical meaning—longevity. We have such expressions as “福如东海长流水，寿似南山不老松” and “松龄鹤寿”. Families have the convention of putting up New Year pictures of pines and cranes, symbolizing the pray for long life.

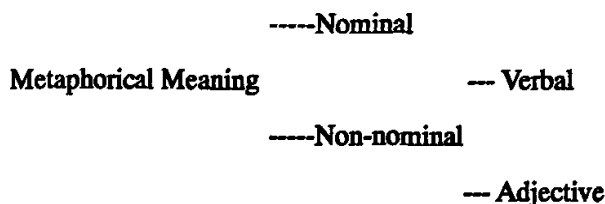
In Chinese, plant metaphors about abstract concepts are more frequently seen in idioms and proverbs. For example, “粗枝大叶”(careless); “沧海一粟”(a drop in the bucket); “明日黄花”(things that are stale and unfashionable); “疾风知劲草”(strength of character is tested in a crisis); “百花齐放”(flourish in the literary field); “成竹在胸”(having a well-thought-out plan); “投桃报李”(exchange gifts); “破竹之势”(overwhelming force); “雨后春笋”(spreading fast); “藕断丝连”(apparently severed, but actually connected); “铁树开花”(something seldom seen or hardly possible); “桃李不言”(being quiet but attractive); “柳暗花明”(hard times change into better times); “青梅竹马”(having an innocent affection for each other in childhood); “蟾宫折桂”(win the first place); “蓬生麻中，不扶自直”(When one is surrounded by the virtuous, he'll be assimilated); “柿子拣软的捏”(flabby person are ridden roughshod over); “拔出萝卜带出泥”(things are always tied up with others); “强扭的瓜”(things happened under compelling force would not have good ending), etc.(*Modern Chinese Dictionary*, 1999; *Practical Chinese Dictionary*, 2000)

English and Chinese share in the domain of abstract concepts. This shows that human beings incline to understand and experience unfamiliar, intangible, abstract concepts in terms of familiar, tangible, concrete ones in our daily life. It is a good witness to the cognitive universality of metaphor.

### 3.2.2 Non-nominal plant metaphors in English and Chinese

According to syntactic constructing features, Shu Dingfang (2000: 59) classifies

metaphors into nominal metaphor, verbal metaphor, adverbial metaphor and prepositional metaphor etc. This paper, in terms of plant metaphors, reclassifies the meanings as showed in figure 2.



**Figure 2 Classification of Metaphorical Meaning**

### **3.2.2.1 Verbal plant metaphors in English and Chinese**

Verbal metaphor refers to the verb having some illogical relationship with subject or object of an utterance (Shu Dingfang, 2000). In a broad sense, verbal metaphor can refer to any linguistic phenomenon when a non-verbal word is transferred to a verb. In terms of this type of plant metaphors, in the source domain, plant is a noun; after mapping onto the target domain, plant is a verb denoting an action. That is to say the mapping of this type of plant metaphor is from a noun domain to a verb domain. For example, “Please rice the cooked potatoes for me”. “Rice” is a noun in English. In this sentence, it is mapped from a noun domain to a verb domain. “Rice” here means “to let it be of rice shape”.

In Chinese, most of the plant words cannot be transformed into verbs. Only several words such as “花”, “核” and “树” can be used as verbs. For example, “花钱”, “花销”, “花时间”, “该花的花,该省的省”, “审核”, “核算”, “核准”, “核资”, “核对账目”, “核定资金”, “核实情况”, “十年树木, 百年树人”, “树敌” etc. (*Modern Chinese Dictionary*, 1999)

In English, plant terms being transformed into verbs are commonly seen. For example, “root” (to have a basis), “stem” (originate from), “flower” (reach the thriving period; be in optimum state), “bud” (develop), “pepper” (be all over, instigate and make active), “rose” (flush; turn to the rose color), “mushroom” (to spread fast), “bamboo” (equipped with bamboo), “ginger” (activate), “moss” (covered with moss), “cabbage” (roll up like a cabbage), etc. “Blossom” has several verbal meanings. “A

relationship blossoms” refers to a certain relationship becomes especially intimate; “someone blossoms” refers to a certain person or cause is becoming more and more mature and successful; “business or career blossoms” refers to the business or cause begins to develop healthily (*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003). Basically, the transformation from nouns to verbs has turned the abstract, general, and conceptual actions to be plain and concrete. Simultaneously, the interlinking of different categories has expanded and concretized the metaphorical meaning.

(91) The roof was bamboosed and ready to be thatched.

(92) These customs are rooted in tradition.

(93) Her interest in flowers stems from her childhood in the country.

(94) That nation briefly flowered after the Second World War.

(95) Their friendship blossomed when they discovered their shared interests.

(96) As her career blossomed, she kept her personal and professional lives totally separated.

(97) New buildings mushroomed all over the area.

(98) He has budded into a young poet.

(99) You don't have to pepper the soup.

(100) She has a face peppered with freckles.

(101) Send new cadres to ginger up timorous local committees.

(*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003; *Longman Contemporary English- Chinese Dictionary*, 1996)

Some extended plant terms are verbs in the original, such as “采”, “采编”, “采购”, “采光”, “采样”, “采写”, “采风”, “采暖”, “摘”, “摘登”, “摘录”, “摘记”, “摘编”, “收获希望”, “笔耕不辍”, “河床枯萎”, “海枯石烂”, “家道凋零”, etc. in Chinese and “cultivate” (mold), “reap” (gain), “germinate” (develop), “prune” (revise), “wilt” (flinch), etc. in English. The mapping of this type of metaphors is from plant domain to other abstract domain.

(102) 古老的土地播种着理想, 中国永远收获着希望。(《中国永远收获着希望》)

(103) 或者尊长不容, 或者大娘妒忌, 闹了几场, 发回妈家, 追取原价; 又有个

家道凋零，养他不活，苦守不过，依旧出来赶趁，这谓之不了的从良。（《醒世恒言》，冯梦龙）

(104)He has been cultivating his image as manager of ability.

(105)I hope you will reap a reward for your hard work.

(106)Another equally outstanding design was germinating.

(107)The company was forced to prune back its promises.

(108)The old man's sharp glance made the young man wilt before his eyes.

(cited from Tang Yanping, 2002)

In the above examples, “播种” and “理想”, “收获” and “希望”, “枯萎” and “家道”, “cultivate” and “image”, “germinate” and “design”, “reap” and “reward”, “prune” and “promise”, “wilt” and “man” belong to different categories. This kind of collocation is called semantic abnormality.

### 3.2.2.2 Adjective plant metaphors in English and Chinese

As to adjective metaphor, a plant term acquires metaphorical meaning by serving as an adjective to modify a noun or being a part of the predicate. It has the same syntactical feature with verbal metaphor. For example, “the mushroom development of technology”, “mushroom” is used as an adjective to describe “development of technology”. The mapping is from a noun domain to an adjective domain based on the distinctive feature of mushroom, growing fast especially after rain. In this sentence, “mushroom” means “spreading fast”.

In Chinese, “木”(numb), “草”(civilian, careless, preparatory), “花”(variegated, confusing people, insincere) are often used as adjectives. For example, “两脚冻木了”, “舌头木了”, “木呆呆”, “木讷”, “木然”, “草贼”, “草民”, “草市”, “草泽医生”, “草书”, “字写得很草”, “草案”, “草稿”, “草底儿”, “草图”, “草约”, “花白”, “花灯”, “花猫”, “花招”, “花账”, “花言巧语”, “森然”, “花点子”, “桃红柳绿”, “柳眉杏眼”, “柳腰”, etc. (*Modern Chinese Dictionary*, 1999)

In English, there are much more plant terms being used as adjectives. For example, “buckwheat braid”(short braid), “wheat complexion”(of wheat color), “cabbage head”(big and round head), “cauliflower ear” (smashing ear),

“bananas”(crazy), “daisy” (crackajack), “garlic” (of garlic smell), “cinnamon” (being seasoned with cinnamon, of cinnamon color), “plum” (mauve), “violet”(purple), “daffodil” (yellowy), “apricot” (of yellow color), “lemon” (yellowy), “tangerine” (of orange color), “ebony” (of black color, being made of ebony), “rose”(happy, optical), “mushroom”(developing fast), “peach” (of peach color), “ebony keys of a piano”, “a lanky man with and ebony face”, “a rose talk”, “a rose plan”, “a mushroom love”, “a peach dress” etc.(*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

(109)The boy went bananas over TV when he was only four years old.

(110)We should learn to see things through rose spectacles.

(111)There are many mushroom towns of the gold-rush days in this area.

(*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

Both English and Chinese have verbal metaphors and adjective metaphors in terms of plant metaphors. But there are more such metaphors in English than in Chinese due to the linguistic reasons.

### 3.3 Plant metonymies

Metonymy was seen as the transfer of a word to a closely related or neighboring thing in ancient rhetoric. This view of metonymy is reflected in the standard definition, which describes metonymy as “a figure of speech that consists in using the name of one thing for that of something else with which it is associated” (*Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of English Language*, 1993).

With the development of cognitive linguistics, many cognitive linguists such as Nunberg (1978), Lakoff (1980, 1987) claimed that metonymy involved basic cognitive process rather than deviant usage. Metonymy consists of a mapping within the same experiential domain or conceptual structure (Lakoff&Turner, 1989:103-104). Metonymy is the case using “one entity to refer to another that is related to it” (Lakoff 1980:35). According to Lakoff and Johnson, metonymy should be included in the category of metaphor. Just like metaphor, metonymy is also a main method of cognition for human beings. “It also serves the function of providing understanding...Metonymic concepts are part of the ordinary, everyday way we think

and act as well as talk...Thus, like metaphor, metonymic concepts structure not just our language but our thought, attitudes, and action. And, like metaphoric concepts, metonymic concepts are grounded in our experience” (Lakoff, 1980:36-39). The main difference between metaphor and metonymy is that metaphor is a mapping between two different domains while metonymy is a conventionalized conceptual mapping in which one conceptual entity provides mental access to another conceptual entity within the same domain, Such as the substitution of part and whole, container and function or content. (Zhao Yanfang, 2001: 115-116) So in this thesis, we’ll put the study of plant metonymies into the study of plant metaphors.

Plant metonymies can be divided into three types: PLANT FOR PLANT PART; PLANT FOR COLOR; PLANT FOR PRODUCT MADE OF OR FROM IT.

### 3.3.1 PLANT FOR PLANT PART

PLANT FOR PLANT PART metonymy is a manifestation of the superordinate metonymy WHOLE FOR PART, which is traditionally called synecdoche (Barcelona, 2000:6). It is commonly seen that plant term denoting its root, stem, leaf, blossom, bud, branch, wood, etc. in English and Chinese. So PLANT FOR PLANT PART metonymy includes the subcases such as PLANT FOR ITS ROOT, PLANT FOR ITS BLOSSOM, PLANT FOR ITS WOOD, etc. The mapping of this type of metonymy is from the plant to a part of it, usually the most commonly seen or used one. There are large number of such metonymies in English and Chinese. For example, “palm” (the leaf of palm tree), “olive” (the fruit, the wood, the leaf, branch of the plant), “walnut” (the fruit of the plant), “mulberry” (the fruit of the plant), “oak” (the wood, the leaf of the tree), “peach” (the fruit, the blossom), “wheat” (the seed of the crop), “spinach” (the leaf of the vegetable), “celery” (the stem of the vegetable), etc.(*English- Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

In Chinese, the examples are as follows, “芋” (the tuber of the plant), “玉米” (the fruit of the plant), “芹” (the stem of the plant), “麦” (the grain of the plant), “麻” (the fibre of the plant), “茄” (the fruit of the plant), “葡萄” (the fruit of the vine), “蒲

公英” (the flower of the plant), “蒜” (the bulb of the vegetable), etc. (*Modern Chinese Dictionary*, 1999)

English and Chinese share the PLANT FOR PLANT PART metonymy. There are large numbers of plants that are frequently used to denote the root, the stem, the bulb, the leaf, the fruit, etc in English and Chinese. Metonymies of this type have been lexicalized and become basic vocabulary in English and Chinese. They have their own fixed semantic meanings that are always fixed as senses of the relevant plant words. Most of the plant words in English and Chinese denote not only the plants but also the most familiar and useful parts. For example, “蒲公英” in Chinese, people have no difficulty in understanding that it denotes not only the plant itself but also the flower that fly with the wind. When it was used repeatedly, the metaphorical meaning would be naturally fixed and become a definition of the plant.

### 3.3.2 PLANT FOR COLOR

We live in a colorful world; everything in our natural environment has a color—the blue sky, the green grass, the red sun, etc. At the same time, the plants—flowers, fruits and trees are most colorful things on the planet. So it's natural thing to map from plant domain to color domain. As for PLANT FOR COLOR metonymy, the source is the plant, and the target is its color. For example, “She always wears apricot skirt in summer.” In this sentence, “apricot” means “a certain color resembling the skin color of apricot”.

In Chinese, there are such metonymies as “桃红柳绿”, “葱翠”, “葱绿”, “葱绿”, “草绿”, “杏黄”, “桔红”, “米黄”, “葡萄紫”, “小麦色”, “藕荷色”, “橄榄绿”, etc. (*Modern Chinese Dictionary*, 1999). While in English, there are much more plant metonymies of this type. For example: “peach”(color of peach), “oak”(brown), “oatmeal”(beigegrey), “maize”(yellow), “pepper-and-salt” (checkered with black and white), “eggplant”(dark purple), “peaches and cream”(white touched with red in color, exquisite and clean in quality), “plum”(purple), “apricot”, “straw”(festucine /pale yellow), “lemon”, “banana”, “olive”, “rose”, “chestnut” (of a golden brown to reddish brown color), “walnut”(brown), “primrose color”(straw yellow), “strawberry



blonde”(golden red), “spinach green”(sap green), “a peach dress”, “an oatmeal coat”, “a pepper-and-salt beard”, “straw hair”, “dressed in lemon”, “a chestnut horse”, “chestnut hair”, “spinach jade”, etc. (*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

(112)She may have contrived to keep her peaches and cream complexion.

(113)She has roses in her cheeks.

(*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

### 3.3.3 PLANT FOR PRODUCT MADE OF OR FROM IT

It is commonly seen in English that plants (source domain) are used to denote the finished products made of or from them (target domain). Such metonymies in English are very rich. For example: “oak”(furniture and doors made of oak), “peppermint”(oil and mint made of peppermint), “plum”(candy), “lemon”(lemon juice), “grape”(grape juice and wine), “jujube”(sauce made of jujube), “mango”(pickled vegetables made of mango, a kind of capsicum), “olive drabs”( grass yellow military uniforms), “daisy”(drink), “rose”(rose perfume and spice), “the hemp”(cigar), “vanilla” (essence made of it), “mahogany” (table), etc.(*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

(114)My grandparents buy oak for their living room.

(115)Would you like a glass of lemon?

(116) He used to love cold milk flavored with vanilla.

(117) Welcome to my mahogany.

(*English-Chinese Dictionary*, 2003)

In Chinese, a plant seldom denotes the products made of it. The only one example is “葫芦”. It is used to refer to the container made of the it as in “你葫芦里面卖的什么药?”

It is clearly seen that English use more metonymies of this type. With advanced science and technology, multiple culture, as well as endlessly emerged novel products, things and phenomena, plant words have more chances to be used to denote finished products in English speaking countries.

## **Chapter Four Analyses of the similarities and differences of plant metaphors in English and Chinese**

The previous chapter has presented a study of plant metaphors in English and Chinese. In this chapter, we'll sum up the similarities and differences between English and Chinese and try to analyze reasons that cause these similarities and differences.

### **4.1 Similarities and differences of plant metaphors in English and Chinese.**

#### **4.1.1 Similarities of plant metaphors in English and Chinese**

Plant is closely related to the environment and climate. Though the geographical environments of the China and English-speaking countries are quite different, we still find some common features of the plant metaphors between English and Chinese. With regard to the conceptual metaphor A PLANT IS A HUMAN BEING, English and Chinese share in the subdomains of “human physical appearances” and “common features of a species of people”. As to the conceptual metaphor A PLANT IS A THING, English and Chinese share in the subdomains of “objects similar in shape, position or function”, as well as “abstract concepts”. In respect of the plant metonymy, English and Chinese share in subcases of PLANT FOR PLANT PART and PLANT FOR COLOR.

As for the conceptual metaphor A PLANT IS A HUMAN BEING, the analyses in 3.2.1.1.1 and 3.2.1.1.2 fully prove that English and Chinese share in this conceptual metaphor. People tend to use plants denoting the human physical appearances and the common features of a species of people both in English and Chinese, which shows the inseparable relationship between plants and human beings. For example, “一杯竹叶穿肠过，两片桃花脸上来”，“She may have contrived to keep her peaches and cream complexion.”, “小辣椒”，“墙头草”，“金枝玉叶”，“草莽”，“tomato”，“rose bud”，“a white lily”，“peach” and so on..

As to the A PLANT IS A THING metaphor, in 3.2.1.3, lots of examples of plant metaphors about objects similar in shape, position and function are presented, such as

“drink lemonade through a straw”, “the root of the tongue”, “the root of the matter”, “the stem of a wine glass”, “descend from an ancient stem” “covered with gold leaf”, “turn over a new leaf”, “蘑菇云”, “石笋”, “舌根”, “祸根”, “刀茎”, “肉芽”, “雪花”, “文艺之花”, etc. Such plant metaphors are important methods for human beings to create relevance between entities of two different categories.

In 3.2.1.3.2, lots of examples in English and Chinese are employed to prove that English and Chinese share in the domain of abstract concepts. There are large numbers of plant metaphors about abstract concepts in English and Chinese. For example, “wear the willow” means failure in love or grief over the passing away of one’s beloved; “feel one’s oats” refers to the state of being elated; “off one’s onions” has the meaning of abnormal consciousness; “eat the leek” means to endure silently the humiliation and insult; “粗枝大叶”(careless), “沧海一粟”(a drop in the bucket), “明日黄花”(things that are stale and unfashionable), “雨后春笋”(spreading fast), “藕断丝连”(apparently severed, but actually connected), etc.

As for plant metonymy, analysis in 3.3.1 proves that English and Chinese share in the plant metonymy of PLANT FOR PLANT PART. It is commonly seen that plant is used to stand for its root, stem, leaf, blossom, bud, branch, and wood in English and Chinese. There are large numbers of such metonymies in English and Chinese, such as “palm” (the leaf of palm tree), “olive” (the fruit, the wood, the leaf, branch of the plant), “walnut” (the fruit of the plant), “芋” (the tuber of the plant), “麦” (the grain of the plant), “麻” (the fibre of the plant), etc.

In 3.3.2, the plant metonymy about color is discussed in detail. Through comparing the examples such as “桃红柳绿”, “葱绿”, “草绿”, “杏黄”, “桔红”, “米黄” in Chinese and “peach”, “oak”, “oatmeal”, “maize”, “eggplant” in English, a conclusion can be drawn that it’s natural thing to map plant (source domain) to its color (target domain) both in English and Chinese.

According to the research of Liao Guang rong(2002), of all the culture-loaded meanings of the 510 plant terms in English and Chinese, the meanings formed by metaphorization constitutes 44.22% in English and 39.96% in Chinese; meanings formed by metonymy constitutes 53.82% in English and 49.8% in Chinese. It shows

that metaphor and metonymy are human beings' basic cognitive capacities by which we think, know and process the events of the world. We are always inclined to understand and experience unfamiliar, intangible, abstract concepts in terms of familiar, tangible, concrete ones in our daily life. Metaphor is an important means to understand the world and conceptualize our experience. The similarities herein strongly support the claim that there do exist cognitive universality as well as linguistic universality since the basic body experience and the close relationship between plants and human beings should be common among all human beings.

#### **4.1.2 Differences of plant metaphors in English and Chinese.**

Chinese and English differ from each other in plant metaphors in many aspects. To sum up chapter three, there are five main differences of plant metaphors in English and Chinese.

① As to the conceptual metaphor A PLANT IS A HUMAN BEING, the subcases of metaphor mapping from plant to moralities and people's names are unique in Chinese. By contrast, people in English-speaking countries tend to employ the conceptual metaphor A PLANT IS (A) GOD, namely, the mapping from plant to divine figure, in their language (Zhao Xin, 1998).

The first difference has been analyzed in detail in 3.2.1.1.3, 3.2.1.1.4 and 3.2.1.2. English tends to use plants denoting gods and goddesses such as "laurel" for Apollo, god of the sun; "lily" for Juno or the Blessed Virgin Mary; "myrtle" for Venus, god of love and beauty; "narcissus" and "poppy" for Ceres, god of grain, etc. Chinese tends to use plant terms standing for people's noble characters, moralities and names. In Chinese culture, flowers and trees are often impersonated and have already become symbols of moralities. For example, "梅", "兰", "竹", "菊" are considered as "four gentlemen" in plants in Chinese for they have such common qualities as persistence, integrity and showing indifference to fame and wealth. Based on these metaphorical meanings of plants, many Chinese are named with these plants, such as "红梅", "春兰", "秋菊", etc. This is the most important difference of plant metaphors in Chinese and English. The difference is determined by the different cultural backgrounds of

different nations.

② As for the abstract concepts domain, the mapping from a flower to an appointed sentiment or intention, also called the “flower language” (Gu Xueliang 1994), is unique in English. (Zhao Xin, 1998) This type of metaphors is not commonly seen in Chinese.

The second difference is analyzed in 3.2.1.3.2.1. English-speaking nations have the convention of presenting flowers to express certain sentiments or intentions. A kind of flower has its special meaning and expresses a certain intention. For example, “single pink” represents pure love; “forget-me-not” represents true love; “lotus” represents love having become estranged; “black poplar” symbolizes courage; “white poplar” symbolizes opportunity; “cedar” symbolizes fidelity, etc. Along with the frequent intercommunion in economy and culture between Chinese and English speaking countries, Chinese people begin to follow the fashion of sending flowers to family members and friends in recent years. But it is not as popular and pervasive as in English. This difference is also determined by different cultural models of different nations.

③ The mapping domains of plant metaphors in English are wider than in Chinese, which can be shown in concrete things domain and plant metonymy PLANT FOR PRODUCT MADE OF OR FROM IT. In English, plants can be mapped onto the target domains as money, ammunition, equipments, sports items and machines, as well as the finished products made of or from these plants. While in Chinese, such metaphors and metonymies are seldom seen.

This difference is analyzed in 3.2.1.3.1.2, 3.2.1.3.1.3 and 3.3.3 In English, plant terms are used to denote ammunition, equipment, sports items, machines, money, as well as the finished products made of or from them. Lots of examples are listed to explain the above difference, such as “willow”(a cricket bat), “onion”(baseball), “apple”(bomb, grenade), “grapeshot” (shrapnel), “spinach” (money), “potatoes” (money), “cucumber” (one dollar), “oak”(furniture and doors made of oak), “peppermint”(oil and mint made of peppermint), “plum”(candy), and so on. In Chinese, plants are seldom used to denote the above mentioned things. This reflects

the fact that English speaking nations prefer unilateral research in depth and attach importance to microcosmic analysis, while Chinese prefers divergent thinking rather than unilateral research in depth. Besides, English speaking countries as Britain and America are advanced in science and technology, multiple in culture. With the emergence of novel products, things and phenomena, plant words have more chances to be used to denote these newly emerged things.

④ In respect of the verbal metaphors and adjective metaphors, most plants in Chinese are mapped onto nominal domains with only a few onto verbal domains and adjective domains, while in English, plant terms are often mapped onto the verbal domains and adjective domains directly.

The fourth difference has been analyzed by the examples in 3.2.2.1 and 3.2.2.2. Most of the plant metaphors in Chinese are mapped onto nominal domains with only a few onto verbal domains. Though the several words such as “核”, “树”, “花” can be transformed into verbs, they must be compounded with another word when used as verbs. For example, “核实”, “树敌”. We should say “核实情况” instead of “核情况”. In English, plant terms are often mapped onto the verbal domains directly. For example, “mushroom” (to spread fast), “ginger” (activate), “Please rice the cooked potatoes for me.” (to let it be of rice shape).

Since the adjective metaphors have the same syntactical feature with verbal metaphors, there are much more adjective metaphors in English than in Chinese. It can be seen very clearly from the examples in 3.2.2.2. In Chinese, only several plant words can be mapped onto adjective domains, such as “木呆呆”, “木讷”, “草民”, “草市”, “花白”, “花灯”. In English, lots of plant words have adjective metaphorical meanings, such as “buckwheat braid” (short braid), “wheat complexion” (of wheat color), “cabbage head” (big and round head), “bananas” (crazy), “a rose talk” (happy). This difference can be explained by linguistic typology.

⑤ From all the above mentioned metaphors and metonymies, a conclusion can be drawn that the plants that Chinese and English attach importance to are quite different. Vegetables, fruits and grains have rich metaphorical meanings in English (Zhao Xin, 1998). By contrast, In Chinese, flowers and trees are more frequently used

in plant metaphors, such as “plum blossom”, “lotus”, “chrysanthemum”, “orchid”, “pine tree”, “bamboo”, “willow”, etc.

It is known to all that trees and flowers such as “梅”, “荷”, “菊”, “兰”, “松”, “竹”, “柳”, and so on are traditional Chinese honorary flowers and trees. Being the core of Chinese plant culture, they are loved by Chinese people from the ancient times till now. There are lots of plant metaphors based on these plants. Such as “人面桃花”, “芙蓉面”, “柳叶眉”, “梨花一枝春带雨”, “杨柳细腰”, “岁寒, 然后知松柏之后凋也”, “寒花开已尽, 菊蕊独盈枝”, “芝兰生于深林, 不以无人而不芳”. By contrast, English people have no special feeling towards the traditional Chinese honorary plants. They are inclined to use vegetables, fruits and grains in plant metaphors, which is a distinctive feature of English language. Such metaphors are frequently seen in English, especially in slang. The examples can be seen in nearly every above mentioned domain, “cabbage head”, “potato-head” and “pumpkin head”(foolish), “cauliflower” (ware of similar shape), “carrot”(tobacco made in the shape of carrot), “apple”(bomb, grenade), “pineapple”(bomb, grenade, light mortar), “a lot of lettuce” (a lot of money), “onion” (money), “cabbage” (paper bill), “straw”( trivial matter, worthless thing), “lemon”(substandard product), etc.

Metaphors of flowers and trees in Chinese are formed on the basis of the similarities in appearances or qualities between plants and human beings. Metaphors of vegetables, fruits and grains in English are formed on the basis of the similarities in appearances between plants and other things. The difference shows the differences in history, culture, way of thinking and taste in English and Chinese.

## **4.2 Analyses of similarities and differences**

Since there are similarities as well as differences between English and Chinese in terms of plant metaphors, then what reasons on earth cause the similarities and differences becomes the focus of my study in the following.

### **4.2.1 Cognitive universality**

According to Lakoff&Johnson, we feel that no metaphor can ever be

comprehended or even adequately represented independently of its experiential basis (1980:19). There are two bases: one is common physical experience of human being which can explain why such metaphors are almost the same in a great number of languages; the other is the cultural experience in a certain society. So expressions of such metaphors vary from culture to culture.

Similarities of plant metaphors in English and Chinese can be attributed to common basic body experience, as well as the close relationship between plants and human beings. Both Chinese and Britain are agriculture countries in the history. Plants are of great importance to both countries. The human basic necessities are indispensable premise of life and all the basic necessities such as foods, clothes, houses, and transportations all come from plants directly. Plants are part of the nature and part of human being. It is generally recognized that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical by mapping concrete domains onto abstract domains, familiar domains onto unfamiliar domains. And metaphorical mapping is said to be not random, that is, conceptual metaphors are grounded in basic human experience. Because of the common features of plants, it is natural for English and Chinese to have many similarities in their recognition of the world by means of plant metaphors. In this sense, we can safely assume that there are similarities in plant metaphors in English and Chinese because different people's cognition may be rooted in the same body experience.

#### **4.2.2 Cultural relativity**

Reasons for the differences between the two languages are a little complicated, which requires us to get to the root of specific cultures, since the human experience and close relationship between plants and human beings can only tell what are possible metaphors, whether these potential metaphors are actually selected in a given culture is largely dependent upon the cultural models. According to Quinn Naomi (1991), it is cultural model that plays a major role in constituting our understanding of the world and constrains the selection of metaphors. The difference in cultural experience leads to the fact that expressions of metaphors vary from culture to culture.



#### **4.2.2.1 Difference in ways of thinking**

Chinese attach great importance to image thinking. They tend to use comparison in their conversations especially in poems. Every time a fair lady endowed with both beauty and talent appears in Chinese classical fictions, the description would be “眉似青山,脸如莲萼,唇缀樱桃,腰若柳枝,指如削葱”. (Zhang Ande, Yang Yuangang, 2002) The westerners think much of the logic analysis and speculation. They tend to make definitions with concepts, speculations and logic. They use clear and definite sentences in communications, which forms a distinct contrast to the implicit expressions of Chinese. Take the examples of plants denoting good looks, “樱桃樊素口”, “杨柳小留腰”, “杏眼桃腮”, “手如柔荑”, “花容月貌”, “指如削葱”, etc. While in English, there are only a few plant terms denoting beauty, such as “rose”, “peach”, “daisy”, “lily”, etc.

#### **4.2.2.2 Difference in aesthetic standards**

Chinese advocate the belief “Heaven-and-man Integration”. They think human beings are a part of the nature. They have the same material basis “Qi”, obey the same basic law “Tao” with the heaven and earth. Chinese see the shadows of themselves on all things in nature, so the characteristics of insects, birds, beasts and plants are used to denote certain kind of human social qualities. (ibid) In fact, Chinese cast human characteristics on various plants in nature, thus leading to the naturalization of human beings and the personification of nature. Therefore, the plant terms are used frequently to denote the human characters and moralities. For example, “岁不寒,无以知松柏;事不难,无以见君子”. The poem indicates that Chinese worship the qualities of uprightness, firmness, and persistence which are also the qualities the pine tree. So there appear a lot of such expressions as “大雪压青松, 青松挺且直。要知松高洁, 待到雪化时”. The poem expresses the author’s aspiration by chanting praise of the pine tree. “梅” flowers in severe cold with clean color and delicate fragrance.. With these qualities, it is always used to symbolize elegance and purity. Chinese have the convention of appreciating and praising plum blossoms. Countless poets write poems

on plum blossoms, Such as “俏也不争春，只把春来报”，“宝剑锋从磨砺出，梅花香自苦寒来”。 Here, the poet is extolling characters and moralities of human beings instead of the plant. We can assume from the analysis in 3.2.1.1.3 that Chinese civilization is known for its ethics and morality. Great importance is attached to cultivating people’s mental and moral characters. In Chinese, Confucianism has built a moral value system for the literati and officialdom, such as constancy, resolution, steadfastness, modesty, chastity and indifference to fame and wealth. Each of the good human qualities connects with a certain plant. Such as the constancy of pine, the resolution of cypress, the tranquility and satisfaction of plum, the modesty of bamboo, the nobility and purity of lotus. Compared to the Chinese culture, the western culture pays more attention to technology and reasoning. (ibid) They seldom relate plants to characters and moralities of human beings. Plant terms are used to symbolize the natural and physical attributes rather than the social ones. For example, “peach”, “rose” and “daisy” connote the young and beautiful girls, reminding people of the red face. There is no moral judgment in these metaphors.

#### **4.2.2.3 Difference in national literature traditions**

English has absorbed lots of myths from the civilization of Greece and Rome (ibid). Many plant metaphors in English are derived from Hellenism. The tendency to use plants denoting gods and goddesses is caused by this literature tradition. For example, “laurel” symbolizes honor and excellence in western culture, which originates from the story of Apollo in Greek myth. Apollo (God of poem) fell in love with Daphne (daughter of god of river) and wooed her with great enthusiasm. Shy Daphne turned into a laurel tree in order to evade his court. So the laurel becomes Apollo’s favorite tree. Being god of poem, he gave an order of weaving the laurel leaves into a garland to reward the poet. The poet who received the laurel garland is called poet laureate. Besides Hellenism, plant metaphors are also influenced by Christianity. Many metaphorical meanings of plant terms come from *The Bible*. (He Ye, 2004) “Olive branch” symbolizes peace, originating from the story of Noah’s Ark. “Red bean” refers to bartering away principles for tiny benefit, which originates from

Essau's selling his birthright for some red bean stew. In Chinese, among the Confucianism, Buddha and Daoism, the culture is deeply affected by Confucianism which holds a leading post in Chinese civilization. Chinese plant metaphors are influenced by Confucianism on a large scale. For example, “岁寒,然后知松柏之后凋也”(《论语》). Hence, pine becomes the symbol of resolution and steadfastness. “昔我往矣,杨柳依依;今我来思,雨雪霏霏”(《诗经》). In this sentence, willow symbolizes parting. Liu Yuxi in Tang dynasty wrote nine poems on willow, the famous sentence “长安陌上无穷树,唯有垂杨管别离” is from the 9<sup>th</sup> one. In Chinese, “桃” also symbolizes brotherhood and long life. The former meaning originates from the story of Liu Bei, Zhang Fei and Guan Yu being sworn brothers in the peach garden in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. In the sentence “桃花潭水深千尺,不及汪伦送我情”(李白《赠汪伦》), peach is the symbol of friendship. The meaning of longevity comes from the myth that Goddess the Queen Mother offers birthday congratulations with saucer peaches. According to the Daoism, peach wood can exorcise the ghosts. So people carve all kinds of door-gods on the peach wood, hanging on both sides of the door to exorcise the ghosts, which is called “春桃”, “桃符”. Besides, the spring peach is used to symbolize spring. There are many poems describing the spring peach such as “竹外桃花两三枝,春江水暖鸭先知”(苏轼《惠崇春江晚景二首》), “正是春光最盛时,桃花枝映李花枝”(杨万里《上巳三首》), “东园三月雨兼风,桃李飘香扫地空”(陆游《山茶》), “双飞燕子几时回,夹岸桃花蘸水开”(徐俯《春游湖》). All these poems on peach have enriched the metaphorical meanings of peach. (Zhang Ande, Yang Yuangang, 2002)

From the above mentioned we can find that on the one hand, the poems were affected by the Chinese culture. On the other hand, the poems edified people's appreciation of beauty, forming certain thinking set.

#### 4.2.2.4 Difference in natural environments and social conventions

①Due to the difference in natural environments, some plants may be frequently seen in one country but seldom seen in another. People would produce no metaphorical meaning to the plants they seldom getting in touch with. For example, in

English, when they describe something spreading fast, they usually use “spring up like mushrooms”, while in Chinese, we have the expression as “雨后春笋”. That is, the bamboo in Chinese has the same metaphorical meaning as mushroom in English. As to bamboo, there is no metaphorical meaning in English because it is impossible for English people to produce any metaphorical meaning to a plant they seldom see.

②Britain has been an agriculture country from 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century. The main industries at that time were agriculture and livestock farming, which are both inseparable to plants. Though China was also an agriculture country in the same period, the main industries were agriculture and handicraft industry. (Liao Guangrong, 2002 )

③Britain had become the most powerful country in the world in the latter half part of 18<sup>th</sup> century. She ruled nearly one-fourth of the world land and one-fifth of the world population, including Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Australia, New Zealand, etc. The differences in floristics, the population, as well as the science and technology contribute to the wider mapping domains of plant metaphors in English.

#### 4.2.2.5 Difference in linguistic forms

According to language typology, English is synthetic-analytic language while Chinese is analytic language. English is an inflectional language with alphabetic writing. Nouns can be transformed into verbs directly or by adding affixes. Chinese characters are meaning-denotation characters with no inflexions. The basic unit of the Chinese writing system is a character. The character is not phonetic capturing sounds or syllables only; it represents a word, a combination of sounds, a visual image and a meaning. Only a few plant words can be transformed into verbs as in “核对”, “核实”, “花销” etc.

In this part, I have accounted for similarities and differences between English and Chinese plant metaphors from cognitive and cultural viewpoints. It is suggested that similarities between the two languages can be attributed to common basic body experience, as well as the close relationship between plants and human beings. More

emphasis is attached to the analysis of what on earth causes the main differences between English and Chinese plant metaphors. Differences in ways of thinking, aesthetic standards, national literature traditions, natural environments and conventions, as well as linguistic forms are taken for the purpose.

## Chapter Five Conclusion

Over the past twenty years, cognitive linguists have made a great deal of discoveries in the study of metaphors. Their theories and findings have brought much impact on the research of the relationship between the metaphors and human thoughts. Inspired by and based on the influential theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson, this paper has devoted to the contrastive study of plant metaphors in English and Chinese.

In this thesis, we have mainly discussed the following aspects: cognition of plant metaphor; mapping models of plant metaphors; plant metonymies; similarities and differences of plant metaphors in English and Chinese as well as the causes. Based on the preceding discussions, we can draw the following conclusions:

① There exist similarities in plant metaphors and metonymies in English and Chinese. For example, with regard to the conceptual metaphor A PLANT IS A HUMAN BEING (from plant domain to human domain), English and Chinese share the subdomains of “human physical appearances” and “common features a species of people” based on the similarities in physical appearances between human beings and plants. As to the conceptual metaphor A PLANT IS A THING (from plant domain to non-human domain), English and Chinese share in the subdomains of “objects similar in shape, position or function” and “abstract concepts”. As to plant metonymies, English and Chinese share in the subcases of PLANT FOR PLANT PART and PLANT FOR COLOR. Given that metaphor is primarily conceptual, it can be said that English and Chinese have many common metaphorical mappings at the conceptual level even though there exist some differences linguistically. What leads to such great similarity in the conceptually distinct languages? From the viewpoint of experientialism proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), similarities between the two languages can be attributed to the common basic body experience, as well as the close relationship between plants and human beings. They provide the mental basis for plant metaphors.

② On the other hand, differences of plant metaphors in English and Chinese can

be explained from the following aspects: different geographic environments, social conventions, developing degree of societies and cultural models. The different geographic environments and social conventions contribute to the fact that the plants employed in plant metaphors in the two languages are different, namely, vegetables and fruits in English and flowers and trees in Chinese. The different developing degrees of societies explain the fact that the mapping domains are wider in English than in Chinese. The cultural relativity including difference in ways of thinking, esthetic standards and literature traditions explain the fact that mapping from plants to the characters and moralities of human beings is unique in Chinese while the mapping to gods and goddesses is unique in English. (Zhao Xin, 1998). The difference in linguistic forms leads to the predominance of nouns in Chinese and verbs in English.

The thesis is just an attempt to make a contrastive study of plant metaphors in English and Chinese from a cognitive perspective. It reinforces some theories of the contemporary cognitive approach to metaphor: conceptual metaphor, at least conceptual metaphors of plant parts are characterized by cognitive universality and cultural relativity. Meanwhile, it will, to a certain degree, be a supplement to the study of plant metaphors. There must be some aspects that we have not touched upon in our discussion and we need a further study in the future.

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