

Translating Conceptual Metaphors in Chinese Stock News Report: A Web-Based Study

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Abstract

Previous studies of stock news report mainly focused on the identification of conceptual metaphors in Chinese or English stock news report. Few of them further analyzed the translation strategies of conceptual metaphors between English and Chinese. Basing on the analysis of Chinese stock news report on FORBESCHINA.COM, this paper investigates conceptual metaphors of UP and DOWN, LOCOMOTION and WAR, and discusses their translation strategies: maintaining original conceptual metaphor, substituting original conceptual metaphor, and deleting the original conceptual metaphor with meaning-kept.

Keywords: Chinese stocks news report, conceptual metaphors, translation strategies

1. Introduction

As a prominent part of current financial market, stock market information is analyzed by both investors and predictors who expect to gain considerable profit. Stock news report plays a significant role in understanding the stock market information. Hence, the translation of stock news reports would influence the interests of their readers.

According to McCloskey, business discourse is metaphorical. While economists themselves do not realize them in daily life, non-economists notice that conceptual metaphors exist in business discourse, which are usually used as a means to explain, testify something or persuade somebody by economists. Some scholars have investigated the conceptual metaphors in business discourse, such as longitudinal study on metaphors in Chinese economic discourse (Tan & Chen, 2010), and comparative study on the metaphors of Olympic economy between English and Chinese media discourse (Zhang & Miao, 2012). However, few studies have been conducted on the recognition and interpretation of conceptual metaphors in Chinese and English stock news reports. According to the search results of CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) in December 31, 2014, only 4 pieces of periodical papers were found by searching the key words “stock market, conceptual metaphor”. Most periodical papers only discussed some kinds of metaphors in stock news report or compared the metaphors existing in English and Chinese (E-C) stock news report without further analyzing the E-C translation strategies of conceptual metaphors in stock news report.

Basing on the analysis of the typical conceptual metaphors in Chinese stock news report, this paper will discuss their English translation strategies from the cognitive perspective. The linguistic materials used in this research are the Chinese stock news reports on FORBESCHINA.COM from July 1, 2013 to December 31, 2013, including 38 articles with 58920 characters.

2. Conceptual Metaphor

“Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action” and “our ordinary conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3). Lakoff & Johnson have scrutinized metaphor further cognitively. “The mind is inherently embodied” and “abstract concepts are largely metaphorical” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 3). Ortony (1993) also noted that the reality of society or the experience of an individual is mainly structured and made sense of via conventional metaphor. Investigating a large amount of English linguistic data, Lakoff observed that many English expressions stemmed from basic metaphors which were called conceptual metaphors by him.

Conceptual metaphor is one means of a word to relate to another and is more representative than others (Lakoff,

2008, pp. 416-417). Metaphor is a matter of understanding one thing in terms of another, involving a cross-domain mapping (from a source to a target domain) in the conceptual system. The conceptual metaphor can be explained as follow: CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN A IS CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN B. Gibbs outlined conceptual metaphors as those enduring conceptual mappings from source to target domains, which motivate a wide range of linguistic expressions (Gibbs, 2002, p. 80). Series of metaphorical expressions are produced through the similarities between the meaning or the structure of source domain and that of target domain. For instance, “We’re headed in opposite direction”, “We’re spinning our wheels”, “Our relationship is at a crossroads”, “Our marriage was on the rocks” are derived from one conceptual metaphor—“Love is a journey”.

In the book *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff & Johnson (1980, pp. 14-61) classified conceptual metaphors into structural metaphors, orientational metaphors and ontological metaphors according to the differences of source domain. A structural metaphor is a conventional metaphor in which one concept is understood and expressed in terms of another structured, sharply defined concept. Structural metaphors allow us to see one highly structured and clearly delineated concept to structure another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 61), such as ARGUMENT IS WAR and TIME IS MONEY. Orientational metaphor is also called spatialization metaphor since most of them have relations with spatial orientations. Human beings use the concrete spatial concepts, such as central and peripheral, deep and shallow, in and out, front and back, up and down etc., to describe abstract concepts like emotion, quality, social status, thus forming orientational metaphor. Ontological metaphor is formed through mapping from obscure and abstract concepts such as feelings, quantity, events to concrete entities. Once experiences can be identified as entities of substances, they can be referred to, categorized, grouped and quantified, and by this means, they also can be reasoned about (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 25-27).

3. Conceptual Metaphors in Stock News Report

“Non-economists find it easier to see the metaphors than economists do, habituated as the economists are by daily use to the idea that of course production comes from a ‘function’ and that of course business moves in ‘cycle’” (McCloskey, 1985, p. 40). McCloskey challenged the very notion that metaphor was virtually absent from economic discourse (Mirowski, 1994, p. 20). The abstract concepts and expressions in business activities would hinder readers from assimilating and digesting relevant information. Consequently, business discourse employs conceptual metaphors to explain unfamiliar economic activities with familiar concepts. As a part of business discourse, stock news report is also metaphorical. With conceptual metaphors, the abstract and complicated stock activities are vividly explained in stock news report.

Analyzing stock news reports on FORBESCHINA.COM from July 1, 2013 to December 31, 2013, a large number of metaphorical expressions are found. Basing on the Lakoff’s classification of conceptual metaphors, conceptual metaphors of UP and DOWN, LOCOMOTION and WAR are identified and discussed in this paper.

3.1 UP and DOWN Metaphor

Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 14) held that the orientational metaphor had an experiential basis in physical and cultural experience of human beings. Human beings use various directions, in which they typically move (ahead, forward, up, down, etc.), to explain the world. Business activities are explained comprehensively through orientational metaphors as well. Enormous complicated economic concepts are often testified through concepts of spatial orientations. In stock news report, there are also series of metaphorical expressions developed from spatial orientations. Among those orientational metaphors, UP and DOWN is applied frequently.

Stock news report employs up and down spatial orientations to testify concepts such as stock prices and trends. Conceptual metaphor of UP and DOWN shows and specifies the changes of stock activities through the changes of spatial orientations. UP shows the tendency to a higher level or an increase while DOWN means going to a lower level or a decrease.

UP and DOWN metaphor is productive in Chinese stock news report. Searching “上”, “涨” and “升”, which indicate UP, and “下”, “跌” and “降”, which suggest DOWN, it is found that UP shows 215 times and DOWN appears 115 times, fewer than the frequency of DOWN, in collected articles. All the articles contains UP and DOWN metaphors. Up and down spatial orientations are used frequently to show the changes in stock market.

In Chinese stock news report, “上”(UP) stands for the increase in the quantity of components in stock market, indicating a favorable tendency, while “下”(DOWN) tells decrease in the quantity, revealing an unfavorable condition. For instance, in the sentence “今年美国 IPO 新股股价与发行价相比平均上涨了 34.6%”(The average U.S. offering is up 34.6% from its offer price), “上涨”(rise or go up) is used to show the price, which is going to a higher position, increases. The stock price, once staying at lower level, becomes more than before. For another example, in the sentence “有趣的是, 该公司宣布, 由于额外的股权补偿支出, 净利润实际下跌 8%,”

至 190 万美元”(Interestingly, net income actually fell 8% to \$1.9 million, the company announced, due to additional share-based compensation.), “下跌”(fell) is employed to describe the decrease in the net income of the company. The net income like human beings or something else fell to a lower position, becoming less significantly than before. The spatial positions “上”(UP) and “下”(DOWN) construct the conceptions that MORE IS UP and LESS IS DOWN respectively.

3.2 LOCOMOTION Metaphor

Locomotion is the process of continually changing position or moving from one place to another, involving certain entity moving or being moved. The position of something keeps changing. In stock news report, invisible stock activity is regarded as an entity, which can move or be moved, to testify the changes in stock market. Hence, conceptual metaphor of LOCOMOTION is formed in stock news report. Stock market itself involves exchanges and changes, similar to the moving nature of locomotion. With stock activity considered as moving entity, the changes in stock market can be illustrated concretely through the changing positions. The LOCOMOTION metaphor can help readers to understand fully the stock information and thus make right decisions about the stock market.

LOCOMOTION metaphor is also productive in Chinese stock news report. Searching words like “反弹”(rebound), “回落”(fall after rise), “震荡”(fluctuate), “流入”(flow in) and “流出”(flow out), which suggest LOCOMOTION, it is found that LOCOMOTION metaphor appears 82 times in collected articles. The stock activities are endowed with the features of moving entities.

In stock news report, stock activities become various entities. For instance, in the sentence “然而, 助使股市反弹的似乎是奥巴马总统”(What seems to have helped the market bounce, though, was President Obama), “反弹”(rebound) is used to describe that stock market, like “弹簧”(spring) which can be pressed or pulled out but return to its former shape when released, move back to its earlier state. The stock market falling into unfavorable situation rebounds to its favorable condition. There are also many other examples. For instance, stock exchange rate is described as an entity moving in the air, being able to “回落”(fall after rise) and “震荡”(fluctuate). Stock capital is liquid, “流入” and “流出”, that is flowing in and out stock market.

3.3 WAR Metaphor

Due to the enduring influence of war, it has been largely a matter of collective unconscious which, as an empirical matter, is inborn and acquired through heredity (Jung, 1981, pp. 42-48). The culture and inherent structure of war have permeated various aspects of human living, including stock market. The meaning structure embodied in war is mapped into the target domain, namely stock activities here. Then the WAR metaphor is structured.

War is a state of armed conflict in which different countries or different groups fight against each other for political or economic interests. Like war, stock activity involves two or more participants. They take different strategies to fight for profits in stock market as different countries or groups fight for interests in war. In stock news report, the structure of war is used to describe the constant changes of stock market, shaping an ontological metaphor STOCK ACTIVITY IS A WAR. Stock market becomes the battlefield and the stock investors are participants. Stock investors exhaust their brains to win the stock battle.

Searching “撤离”(evacuate), “突破”(break through), “收复”(recapture), “赢”(win), “攻”(attack) etc., which reflect the nature and structure of WAR, metaphorical expressions developed from WAR also appear frequently in stock market with 90 times. For instance, in the sentence “在股市出现实质性上涨之前, 这些金融公司就纷纷撤离了股市”(Operators got off the bus before the Big Board rallied meaningfully), “撤离”, meaning “withdraw or evacuate”, shows participants of stock market withdraw from the battlefield for profits. Afraid of unfavorable situations, the investors take measures to leave stock market, the battlefield. Here is another example. In the sentence “而且, 成长型公司还会遭受以下类型的攻击”(Growth companies suffer attacks from below, too), “攻击”, meaning attack, describes that growth companies can not be free from attacks launched by other elements in the stock market. Growth companies are endowed with features of participants in a battlefield and become targets of other groups in a war.

4. Translation Strategies of Conceptual Metaphor in Chinese Stock News Report

UP and DOWN, LOCOMOTION and WAR metaphors are used widely in stock news report to present or explain stock activities by mapping the features of spatial orientations, moving entities and war to the changes and situation of stock market.

The cognitive and language developing process of a certain speech community has no definite parallel in another from the formation of prototype and concept to the categorization and shape of various propositions and

assumptions (Zhang, 2006). Different cognitive preferences and styles would cause differences between different countries as well (Kövecses, 2005). English and Chinese are two different languages. Consequently, the conceptual metaphors applied in Chinese stock news report should be taken into consideration when they are translated in English and vice versa.

Translation of stock news report, a kind of news translation, also has the features of news translation. The main objective of news translation is the fast transmission of information in a clear way so that it can be communicated effectively to readers (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2011, p. 63). Besides, stock news report intends to transmit the facts and information about stock activities. It emphasizes the contents rather than the form of texts, which is typical of informative text. According to Reiss's text typology, informative text, which mainly tells the facts, information, knowledge, opinions etc., is highly logical, focusing on the content rather than the form of text. Thus the translation of informative text should transmit the same concept and information in a clear way (Zhang, 2013). Therefore, the clear transmission of information should be the priority in the English translation of Chinese stock news report. However, the time, space, genre, cultural aspects are also important in news translation (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2011, p. 63). Hence, when the clear information transmission is achieved, the English translation of Chinese stock news report should also conform to English culture and English expressions.

The conceptual metaphors in stock news report are all intended to describe and testify the changes in stock market. Stock activities are the target domains in the conceptual metaphors of both English and Chinese stock news reports. English and Chinese stock news reports employ various concepts, being the source domains, to describe stock activities, being the target domains. The concepts of source domain would be different in English and Chinese news reports although they describe the same thing.

This paper divides the source domains into two categories: same, referring to that the concepts of source domain are shared in both English and Chinese, and different, referring to that the concepts of source domain in Chinese have no parallel in English and vice versa. In this way, the English translation of Chinese stock news report will be discussed in the following sections.

4.1 Maintaining the Original Conceptual Metaphor

The experience of different peoples about the objective world, which is obtained through body structure, is similar as human beings share the similar physical traits (Sun & Du, 2013). The similar human psyche and experience to the universal concepts or activities would have contributed to the similar metaphorical expressions between English and Chinese stock news reports.

When the concept of source domain of conceptual metaphors in Chinese stock news report is as same as that in English, the original one can be maintained in English translation. The messages about the stock market can be delivered instantly and clearly without misunderstanding. For instance, in English stock news report, there are also UP and DOWN metaphors used to describe the stock activities. Lexicon meaning UP, like rise, soar, skyrocket, ascend, up and rocket, is employed to reflect the good tendency to a high place or position in stock market while lexicon meaning DOWN, like slump, dip, down, drop and decline, is used to reveal the condition that the price or else of stock is going toward a lower place or position and it is not good. Obviously, the cognition about UP and DOWN is equivalent in both English and Chinese. Thus, when the Chinese UP and DOWN metaphors are translated, the original metaphorical expressions generated from it can be maintained. See an example extracted from the collected stock news reports and its translation:

标普 500 指数在随后 10 个月内下跌了 21.5%，而于 10 月初见底。

The S&P 500 declined 21.5% over the next ten months, as it bottomed in early October.

“下跌” in the original sentence exemplifies the conceptual metaphor of UP and DOWN, telling the DOWN tendency to a lower price. “Decline”, meaning “to become smaller, fewer or less”, is also a metaphorical expression produced from the UP and DOWN metaphor as “decline” shows the tendency of stock price goes toward a lower level.

Besides UP and DOWN metaphor, some metaphorical expressions of WAR metaphor in English stock news report also can be maintained without changes. Conceptual metaphor of WAR is also similar in English and Chinese. Here is an example:

而且，成长型公司还会遭受以下类型的攻击。

Growth companies suffer attacks from below, too.

In the Chinese sentence, “攻击” means launching a fight against the enemies in the battlefield. When it comes to the stock activities, it is used to describe the participants in the stock market would be hit fiercely by something

or someone else. In English translation, “attack”, meaning “to use violence to try to hurt or kill somebody”, also verifies its derivation from WAR metaphor.

Apart from UP and DOWN and WAR metaphors, part of metaphorical expressions produced from LOCOMOTION metaphor in Chinese stock news report also can be maintained in English Translation. Some concepts of source domain in LOCOMOTION metaphor are similar in English and Chinese. For instance, both Chinese and English stock news report would regard stock activity as moving spring, which can be “反弹” (in Chinese) and “rebound” (in English). Here is an example:

然而，助使股市反弹的似乎是奥巴马总统。

What seems to have helped the market bounce, though, was President Obama.

In the Chinese sentence, the stock market is described as a “弹簧”(spring). It moves back to its former position after reaching an unfavorable position with external force, such as the help of President Obama. Thus “反弹”(rebound) constructs a conceptual metaphor STOCK MARKET IS MOVING ENTITY. In English translation, “Bounce”, which means moving away from a surface it has just hit, also shows that the stock market moves away from the unfavorable condition. Then in English translation, the stock market also has the features of its source domain moving entity. Therefore, when the sentence is translated into English, the conceptual metaphor can be maintained as the stock market also can be explained through STOCK MARKET IS MOVING ENTITY in English.

4.2 Substituting the Original Conceptual Metaphor

English and Chinese would describe the same kind of stock activities in different manners, as the two languages are both rooted in their own cultures. The cultural preferences to describe stock market activities appear in English and Chinese stock news report. The concepts preferred in their own cultures construct their understandings of stock market, resulting in different conceptual metaphors in English and Chinese stock news report. Consequently, the readers of English-speaking countries would barely understand or even misunderstand the direct translation of some Chinese metaphorical expressions which have no modifications.

What the readers of stock news report pay attention to is stock information such as stock prices and index rather than the specific way it appears. The fast transmission of stock information is the priority. Therefore, Chinese metaphorical expressions with source domain having specific cultural features can be substituted by those conforming to English thinking pattern and culture.

While UP and DOWN and WAR metaphors can be maintained in English translation, some of Chinese metaphorical expressions generated from conceptual metaphor of LOCOMOTION should adopt the translation strategy of substituting the original ones. Although they are all used to describe the same target domain stock activity, the moving entities in LOCOMOTION metaphor in Chinese stock news report would be different from that in English. For instance, in Chinese stock news report, “套牢”, meaning “to tie or bundle firmly”, is widely used to describe the condition that investors are trapped in stock market. Here is an example:

养老基金和个人投资者的情况也好不了多少，尤其是如果他们碰巧正在坚定持有美国国债或者深度套牢在债券型基金上的话。

Pension funds and individuals didn't fare much better, especially if they happened to be clutching Treasury bills or mired in bond funds. Practically nobody is using margin aggressively.

In Chinese stock news report, the investors trapped in stock market, like something fastened by another thing, are tied firmly by the stock market, falling into trouble. However, English stock news reports prefer to use “mire in” to describe the same condition. Rather than something can be tied or bundled, the investors trapped in stock market are more like something striking in mud.

4.3 Deleting the Original Conceptual Metaphor with Meaning-Kept

In addition to substituting the original conceptual metaphor, those Chinese conceptual metaphors, whose concepts of source domain have no parallel in English, also can be deleted and translated into non-metaphorical expressions.

The main objective of stock news report translation, a kind of news translation, is fast transmission of information. Deleting the original conceptual metaphors with meaning-kept can help the English translated version to achieve its objectives. The metaphorical expressions can be alternatively paraphrased and become non-metaphorical in the translation of Chinese stock news report. In this way, the meaning conceptual metaphor tries to deliver is retained, leading to clear and easy understanding among readers of stock news report.

See an example extracted from the collected articles and its translation:

本月相对强劲的公司盈利报告已经使媒体的财经关注点从美国政府停摆、巨额国债以及 1,100 多万失业人口等话题上转移到别处。

Relatively strong company earnings this month have helped take the market headlines away from a dysfunctional government in Washington, biblical national debt and more than 11 million unemployed.

In the Chinese version, “停摆”, which means a pendulum comes to a stop, is used to describe the condition that American government, a component of stock market, shuts down. The government in Washington is explained metaphorically as moving entity, a pendulum, forming a LOCOMOTION metaphor. Thus the government in Washington is endowed with the features of a pendulum. It would come to a stop and no longer function. When the sentence is translated into Chinese, the metaphorical expression can be abandoned and only keep its connotation—the government is no longer functional. “Dysfunctional”, the translation of “停摆”, clearly states that information.

Here is another example:

但是, 这种担心从来都是不攻自破。

But again, this is an unsubstantiated worry.

In the Chinese, “不攻自破”, which means “defeated without being attacked”, constructs a WAR metaphor. “这种担心”(the worry), referring to other companies’ entry into the market according to the context, is shaped as element in the war and can be defeated easily without attacks like city, enemy or something else. “不攻自破” demonstrates that the worry will be easily proved to be wrong as it is not supported by evidence. When the sentence is translated into English, the WAR metaphor constructed by “不攻自破” is deleted but its connotation is maintained by “unsubstantiated” which means “not proved to be true by evidence”.

5. Conclusion

Stock news reports describe the changes and conditions of stock market by mapping the characteristics of up and down, moving entity and war to the abstract and complicated stock activities, thus producing conceptual metaphors of UP and DOWN, LOCOMOTION and WAR. A good understanding of conceptual metaphors in stock news report would be conducive to seize the stock information.

The English translation of Chinese stock news report should pay attention to the transference of conceptual metaphors as English and Chinese ones would be different. The prior target of English translation of Chinese stock news report is the fast transmission of stock information. Consequently, the English translation of Chinese conceptual metaphors, whose concepts of source domain are as same as those in English, can adopt the translation strategy of maintaining the original conceptual metaphors. And the English translation of Chinese conceptual metaphors, whose concepts of source domain are different from those in English, can adopt the translation strategy of substituting by those conforming to English expressions and culture. Additionally, Chinese conceptual metaphors also can be deleted as long as the meanings they try to convey are kept in their English translations.

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