

Metonymy Interpretation of Chinese Idioms——Taking the Idiom Allusions in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* as an Example

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Abstract: Under the background of the rise of cognitive linguistics, Chinese idioms, as a unique cultural carrier, are increasingly valued by people. As a classic work, the *Romance of The Three Kingdoms* contains a large number of idioms and allusions that are valuable materials for people to learn and draw lessons from. Taking the *Romance of The Three Kingdoms* as an example, this paper analyzes the metonymy of Chinese idioms, clarifies the concept of metonymy, analyzes the source and classification of the idioms in *Romance of The Three Kingdoms*, and discusses the metonymy content of the idioms in *Romance of The Three Kingdoms*, including the metonymy of part and whole, the metonymy of cause and effect, the metonymy of container and content. This will help us better understand the classic romance of The Three Kingdoms culture connotation and language features, provide new thought and method to use Chinese.

Keywords: Chinese idioms, Metonymy interpretation, *Romance of The Three Kingdoms*, cognitive linguistics, cultural connotation

1. Introduction

Chinese idioms contain rich historical and cultural information, are an indispensable part of the Chinese vocabulary system, and have unique cultural value. With its simple form and rich connotation, Chinese idioms are the crystallization of Chinese national wisdom and culture. Metonymy, as an important cognitive activity, plays an important role in the generation, understanding and inheritance of Chinese idioms. As one of the four classics of China, *Romance of The Three Kingdoms* vividly reproduces the history from the last years of the Eastern Han Dynasty to The Three Kingdoms period with its vivid images and rich plots. Through the metonymy analysis of idioms, we can deepen the understanding of the semantic generation mechanism of idioms, and excavate the cultural connotations contained in them. At present, the study of Chinese idioms and *Romance of The Three Kingdoms* is much, but there is few to turn as the breakthrough point of the research. Therefore, this paper will analyze the allusions of Chinese idioms in *Romance of The Three Kingdoms*, and reveal the important role of Chinese idioms in the use of idioms.

2. The basic concept of metonymy

Metonymy is a cognitive model based on the close relationship between things. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, metonymy plays a crucial role in human thinking. Metonymy is not only a rhetorical method, but also an important means for people to understand the world and express their thoughts. Metonymy has many basic forms, such as part and whole, cause and effect, container and content. With the help of these patterns, people can lead from one concept to another, so as to realize the transmission and understanding of meaning^[1].

3. Origin and classification of idioms in *Romance of The Three Kingdoms*

As a classic of *Romance of Three Kingdoms*, the idiom is very rich in resources, the source is very extensive, involving historical events, character story, describe several aspects, such as war, as is the idiom "zhong liver bile" and

"ingenuity", vividly depicted the brave both characters; Second, "the Red Cliff battle" and "grass boat borrow arrows" as the main content, the tragic scene of ancient war is incisively and vividly displayed; The third is "three visits to the villa", "looking at plum to quench thirst", these two stories have specific plots and characters, as well as specific social and cultural background.

4. Metonymy analysis of idioms in *Romance of The Three Kingdoms*

4.1 Metonymy of part and whole

Metonymy is a kind of rhetorical method based on the correlation between things. It uses the parts of things to represent the whole and the whole to represent the part. The local metonymy and the global metonymy in the *Romance of The Three Kingdoms* show incisively and vividly in its rich language world. The idiom "single-shot" fully embodies the metonymy technique of "taking the local as the whole". In the grand war scenes of *Romance of The Three Kingdoms*, "single gun" and "horse" symbolize weapons and mounts respectively, and these local elements subtly reflect the state of the characters at that time. Warriors are the most direct way of attack, is also a sign of their combat effectiveness and attacking style; You know, the horse is the warrior's most important partner, representing a warrior's ability to maneuver on the battlefield^[2]. The word "single-handedly" gives people a sense of not only the sword, but also the scene of a soldier fighting alone on the battlefield. This kind of metaphor allows us to have a general understanding of the full picture of the war in two paragraphs. In the fiction, the generals in some critical moments, such as Zhaoyun tend to have similar single-handedly into battle, "alone" attitude, but also to his bravery and valor performance incisively and vividly, make a person feel the fierce war and fortitude character.

4.2 Metonymy of cause and effect

From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, there is a close relationship between the two. The idiom "Le not Si Shu" from *Romance of The Three Kingdoms* is a good example. Later, people used the idiom "Le Bu si Shu" to describe indulging in sex and emotion. "The romance of The Three Kingdoms" in Liu Chan after the surrender, he is in the new environment, enjoy the sight of comfort and joy, and Shu behind their motherland. This metonym of cause and effect makes people deeply feel Liu Chan's fatness and betrayal of his country from the idiomatic phrase "Happiness without yearning for Shu". "Le" is the portrayal of Du Fu's life in Luoyang, while "Don't think about Shu" clearly points out the serious consequences of being happy and not thinking about Shu. This was not only a defect of Zhuge Liang's personal character, but also an important reason for the decline and fall of the Shu-Han regime, and Liu Chan was the fundamental reason for the decline and fall of the Shu-Han regime. Through this idiom, one can better understand the motives of the characters' actions, the development logic of the story, as well as the rise and fall of history and the complexity of human nature.

4.3 Metonymy of container and content

Container-content metonymy is a common way of metonymy, which constructs meaning by using the relationship between containers and their contents. A typical representative of the carrier metonymy relationship in *Romance of The Three Kingdoms* is the "Jencuomiaoji", which is a metonymy relationship with content as the carrier. In the "Jinsuo Miaoji", "Jinsuo" as the container well represents the "miaoji" in it. In the novel, Zhuge Liang gives the "tricks" to the officers and makes them the carrier of the strategy. The "tricks" have a mysterious color and are regarded as a symbol of wisdom and strategy. When a general opens the bag, the "trick" often becomes the key to victory or defeat. The metonymic relationship between "trick" and "trick" makes "trick" no longer just a simple "pocket", but a whole closely connected with the content of "trick". This metonymy makes the story more interesting and mysterious. In the process of reading this book, the reader will be curious about the "tricks up his wits", and the wisdom of Zhuge Liang is also highlighted. At the same time, the "tricks up his sleeve" also reflects the importance of strategy and tactics in war and political struggle, which are conveyed and exerted through specific carriers^[3].

4.4 Metonymy of characters and characteristics

In the idiom world of *Romance of The Three Kingdoms*, there is a metonymy relationship between characters, which refers to the characteristics of the characters. This characteristic is embodied in the idiom "battle of words among Confucians". Zhuge Liang is the main character in the idiom, and the "tongue" here does not only refer to human organs, but to Zhuge Liang's eloquence. Zhuge Liang fought against Confucianism in Soochow, and persuaded Soochow and Liu Bei to fight against Cao together. This is a very commendable work. From the perspective of metonymy, the "tongue" in

the novel is the specific expression of the character characteristics. When it comes to "fighting with Confucians", people will come up with the image of Zhuge Liang's eloquence and eloquence, which is the power of "character metonymic". Zhuge Liang's eloquence and wisdom can be seen from the idiom "war of words among the Confucianists". Metonymy makes idioms no longer a simple combination of words but a vivid picture with rich cultural connotations. It also reflects the importance of language and eloquence in the political struggle of the three countries, which can be seen from the political struggle at that time. Zhuge Liang's eloquence played a vital role in winning a favorable strategic position for Liu Bei's side. Through metonymy, we can see the character characteristics of the characters in the novel and understand their important role in history.

4.5 Metonymy of tools and users

In *Romance of The Three Kingdoms*, there are ingenious metonymy relationships between tools and their users, and "borrowing arrows from Grass boats" is one of them. "Caoboat" is one of the important props of "Caoboat borrowing arrows", and its use has a great relationship with Zhuge Liang. The grass boat itself is not extraordinary, but under the careful design of Zhuge Liang, it became the key to seize the bow of Cao Jun. Zhuge Liang borrowed the word "grass boat" to describe his wisdom and strategy. When it comes to "borrowing arrows from the grass boat", people will naturally think of Zhuge Liang using the grass boat to "borrow" a large number of arrows from Cao Jun, and the grass boat became the symbol of Zhuge Liang as a user. It reflects Zhuge Liang's ability to use tools to achieve his goals. It can be seen that Zhuge Liang is good at borrowing things from things, so that the "grass boat" is no longer just a boat, but closely related to Zhuge Liang's wisdom and ability. This metonym of "instrument" and "use" gives the idiom "straw boat borrow arrow" a richer connotation, which fully embodies the wisdom of war and the importance of being good at using tools. From this idiom, we can more deeply understand Zhuge Liang's outstanding ability in The Three Kingdoms period.

Concluding Remarks

In short, this paper illustrates the generation and understanding of Chinese idioms through metonymy in *Romance of The Three Kingdoms*. The idioms in *Romance of The Three Kingdoms* are not only a wonderful work in the Chinese language, but also a very valuable metonymy resource. It combines historical events, characters and cultural connotations, and reflects the values and ways of thinking of ancient Chinese people. Through the metonymy analysis of Chinese idioms, we can deepen our understanding of the semantics, cultural connotation and cognitive mechanism of Chinese idioms.

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