Exploring the Translation Model of Poetic Metaphor based on Conceptual Integration Theory\(^1\)

HAN Jiang-hua  
The College of Literature and Journalism of Sichuan University, Chengdu, China

Poetic metaphor is a kind of conceptual structure formed by conceptual integration. It is the cognitive means, which is used by the poets to understand things and express emotions. As a conceptual structure, the poetic metaphor expresses certain semantic content, and its meaning construction is a kind of non-linear integration mode. In the translation of poetic metaphor, the translators should take the conceptual integration theory as the guide, construe the poetic metaphor firstly, in order to understand that what entities are participated in the conceptual integration of the poetic metaphor, and how the process of conceptual integration is; then, take the construal results as the basis, and take the cultural background of the target language as a reference, to reconstruct poetic metaphor in the target language, so as to achieve the purpose of translation and information dissemination. In the process of poetic metaphor translation, the translator’s cognitive model, ability and preference, the proficiency of the source language and target language, the familiarity of the culture of the source language and target language, personal encyclopedic knowledge reserve, and personal language expressing preference will affect the translation results of poetic metaphor. In addition, when the translators reconstruct the poetic metaphor in the target language, they must follow the principle of semantic consistency, cultural adaptation and universality.

*Keywords:* poetic metaphor, conceptual integration, translation, construe, reconstruct

1. Introduction

In all article types, poetry is the most difficult one to translate; such as poetry format, rhyme, etc. are usually untranslatable, which is the consensus of the translation community (Gentler & Baker, 2005, p. 170). Of course, poetry translation is not only limited by the special forms and rhyme factors, but also influenced by non-verbal factors such as habits of thinking and national culture, which is often difficult or even impossible to find corresponding expressions (Xiao, 2009, p. 226).

However, we believe that the real difficulty in poetry translation lies in the translation of poetic metaphor and metaphorical thinking.

Metaphor is the logic of poetry and an important means for poetry to reproduce human emotions; without metaphor, poetry is difficult to achieve its creative intentions (Han, 2017). Therefore, the key to poetry creation

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HAN Jiang-hua, Doctorate degree, Associate research Professor, The College of Literature and Journalism of Sichuan University.
lies in the construction of poetic metaphor. Simultaneously, the key to poetry translation lies in the translation of poetic metaphor.

Poetic metaphor is a conceptual structure, and is an important means for poets to realize poetic cognition and express emotions (Tang, Qi, Wang, Jia, & Ren, 2017). The creation of poetry is inseparable from poetic metaphor which is the means of cognition and conceptualization. We can say that the essence of poetic metaphor lies in cognition, which is an important means for poets to construct poetic cognition and achieve conceptualization (Han, 2017). Poetic metaphors construct most of the poet’s poetic concept system, because poetic metaphor itself is highly systematic both in internal and external. On the one hand, a poetic metaphor can derive many inclusive metaphorical expressions; On the other hand, different poetic metaphors can describe different aspects of the same entity, thus constructing a complete conceptual system.

How to reproduce these poetic metaphors and their metaphorical thinking in the target language in translation is the key factor to determine the quality of poetry translation. To this end, we will use the conceptual blending theory to explore an effective translation model of poetic metaphor.

2. Poetic Metaphor Translation Model Based on Conceptual Blending

Conceptual blending model is an important paradigm of cognitive semantics research and is widely used in many semantic-related research fields. The theory of conceptual blending was officially proposed by Fauconnier and Turner in their paper *Conceptual Integration Networks* in 1998. A basic concept integration network consists of four interrelated mental spaces: Input space I, Input space II, Generic space, and Blending space. The complete conceptual blending diagram is as follows:

![Figure 1. Basic concept blending network (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002, p. 46).](image)

Figure 1 shows the main features and operational mechanisms of conceptual blending. The circle represents the mental space, the solid line represents the cross-space matching and mapping between the input space elements, the dotted line represents the connection between the input space and the generic space and the blending space, and the square in the blending space represents the new emergent structure, a new conceptual structure formed by blending (Eppe, Maclean, Confalonieri, Kutz, Schorlemmer, & Plaza, 2018). Input space I and input space II provide information for the blending space; at the same time, their common information will be
projected into the generic space to form information of the generic space. The information and frame structure of the generic space and the two input spaces will be selectively projected into the blending space, through a composition, completion, and elaboration, an emergent structure will generate (Klapper, Dotsch, Rooij, & Wigboldus, 2018).

The entire conceptual blending network fully reflects the nonlinear semantic integration view (Han, 2019). It believes that semantic construction is not a simple linear pattern of “1+1=2”, but instead forms a new semantic content different from the sum of “1+1” under the influence of the blending mechanism.

The construction of poetic metaphor is also realized by a nonlinear blending model. It uses conceptual blending mechanism to blend concepts from different conceptual domains to form an emergent structure in the blending space to realize conceptualization, thus constructing new semantic content.

Therefore, in order to accurately understand the semantic connotation of a poetic metaphor, the translator must understand in detail the conceptual blending process of this poetic metaphor. Only in this way can the translator know in detail that how this poetic metaphor is constructed by what kind of entity through conceptual blending, and what intralingual and extralingual knowledge is involved. When translators know about these in detail, they can better present the true semantic content of poetic metaphor in the target language in translation.

The translation of poetic metaphor based on conceptual blending theory can be divided into two steps. The first step is to construe, using the conceptual blending mechanism to analyze in detail the constituent elements of poetic metaphor in the source language and how these elements are blending to achieve conceptualization and expression. The second step is to reconstruct, using the conceptual bending mechanism to reconstruct the poetic metaphor consistent with the semantic connotation of the poetic metaphor in the source language in order to achieve a good translation effect.

2.1 Construing

As poetic metaphors are formed through conceptual blending, when we translate poetic metaphors, first, we should understand and interpret the poetic metaphor through the theory of conceptual blending. We should know about: which elements and frame structure are contained by the input spaces of poetic metaphor, how the elements between input spaces are matched and mapped, which elements of the input spaces are projected into the generic space to make up the generic space, which elements and frame of generic space and input spaces are projected into the blending space, and how the emergent structure formed in the blending space through a composition, completion, and elaboration.

Such as the thematic poetic metaphor “Personal desire is nothingness” in the poetry Haoliaoge of A Dream of Red Mansions. When interpreting it, firstly, we must find its two input spaces: one is the Confucianism’s view (Promote the pursuit of fame and fortune, erotic attachment, father-son relationship, etc.), one is the Taoist view (Advocating the pursuit of desirelessness and freedom). The “view of life and end of life” in these two input spaces forms an abstract framework element of the generic space; the elements of the generic space and the two input spaces form a negative state of opposition through cross-space mapping and projection: Fame, wealth, beautiful wife, children and grandchildren, all of these are gone, and all are nothingness. After being projected into the blending space, with the cognitive operation of the brain compression mechanism, as well as composition, completion, and elaboration, these opposing and negating elements form a emergent structure: No
matter how much you pursue, there will be nothing in the end. Thus construct a thematic poetic metaphor “Personal desire is nothingness”.

Only after we understand a lot of these poetic metaphors in detail can we deliberately reconstruct the poetic metaphors in the target language to achieve the best translation effect. Of course, in the process of construing poetic metaphors, due to differences in translators’ personal cognitive models and cognitive preferences, as well as differences in personal knowledge reserves and language and cultural backgrounds, different translators’ interpretations of the same poetic metaphor are bound to be different. This difference in construing will be reflected indirectly through differences in the poetic metaphors reconstructed in the target language.

Specifically, the factors that affect the construing of poetic metaphors by different translators include the following factors:

2.1.1 Mastery of source language and culture
Mastery of the source language includes whether to master the semantic characteristics and grammatical expression habits of the source language. If the source language has ancient form, we must know about the differences between ancient and modern forms. All of these factors are related to the translator’s accurate understanding of the poetic metaphor of the source language. Most of Chinese poems are written in classical Chinese. This requires translators to be proficient in classical Chinese. Only in this way, the translator can properly and accurately interpret the poetic metaphors in the Chinese poetry.

Any poetic metaphor is rooted in a certain culture (Spina, Arndt, Landau, & Cameron, 2018). When interpreting a poetic metaphor, we must put it in the cultural context of the source language. Therefore, the translator’s degree of understanding the culture of the source language will directly affect the interpretation result. For example, in the interpretation of the thematic poetic metaphor “Personal desire is nothingness” in the poetry Haoliaoge of A Dream of Red Mansions, the translator must understand the connotation and extension of Chinese Confucian and Taoist culture. At the same time, the translator must interpret the thematic metaphor “Personal desire is nothingness” in the context of traditional Chinese culture. Without the background of Confucian and Taoist cultures, it is difficult for translator to accurately interpret the true meaning of the thematic poetic “Personal desire is nothingness”

2.1.2 Personal encyclopedia knowledge reserve
As a conceptual structure, poetic metaphor expresses a certain semantic content. Understanding its semantic content requires both intra-lingual and extra-lingual knowledge. Therefore, the richness of the translator’s encyclopedic knowledge will also affect the interpretation result. For example, in the Haoliaoge of A Dream of Red Mansions, in the process of constructing the thematic poetic metaphor “Personal desire is nothingness”, the poet incorporates the ancients’ birth of life (“life is day”), the process of life growth (“life is seeing”), and death of life (“Death is the night”), etc. (Xiao, 2009, p. 241). These are all encyclopedic knowledge outside the language. The richness of the translator’s reserves of these encyclopedic knowledge will affect the interpretation of poetic metaphor to a certain extent: richness of encyclopedic knowledge reserves will help translators interpret poetic metaphor more accurately; on the contrary, insufficient encyclopedic knowledge reserves will hinder translator to accurately interpret poetic metaphors.
2.1.3 Translators’ cognitive models and cognitive preferences

Everyone’s cognition has some differences, and people’s cognition often has some unique characteristics and preferences. Therefore, different translators often have different cognition for the same poetic metaphor. For example, in the translation of the thematic poetic metaphor “Personal desire is nothingness” in the poetry Haoliaoge of A Dream of Red Mansions, Yang Xianyi and Dynedale (Yang & Dynedale, 1999, p. 9), because of the influence of traditional Chinese culture and cognitive models, their translation reflects the cognitive orientation of Taoism; however, Hawke and Minford (Hawke & Minford, 1974, p. 17) are deeply influenced by Christian culture and its cognitive model, so their translation clearly reflects the cognitive orientation of Christianity “salvation”. The translators of the two versions have different interpretations of the thematic poetic metaphor “Personal desire is nothingness” in the poetry Haoliaoge of A Dream of Red Mansions due to their different cognitive models and cognitive preferences.

2.2 Reconstruction

Reconstruction means that after completing the construing of poetic metaphors, the translator reconstructs the poetic metaphors in the target language that are consistent with the semantic content of the poetic metaphors in the source language to achieve the purpose of translation. Poetic metaphor is formed through conceptual integration, and its semantic model is a nonlinear blending model. Therefore, translators cannot simply translate words to words when translating poetic metaphors. Translators need to take the construing of poetic metaphors in the source language as the basis and reconstruct the poetic metaphors according to the target language’s expression and cultural habits to achieve the best translation effect. In the process of translating poetic metaphors from the source language text to the target language text, some information is lost, which is an inevitable phenomenon in translation (Tiwiyanti & Retnomurti, 2017). In the process of translating poetic metaphors, what the translator needs to do is to reduce the loss of information as much as possible, and make the greatest efforts in the reconstruction to present the information that the poetic metaphors express in the source language.

Specifically, the factors that influence translators’ reconstruction of poetic metaphors in the target language include the following:

2.2.1 Proficiency in the target language and personal language preferences

Reconstruction of poetic metaphor is inseparable from language expression. Translators’ mastery of the target language influences the reconstruction of poetic metaphor in the target language to a certain extent. In the reconstruction of poetic metaphor, whether to choose appropriate and refined language directly affects the expression effect of the reconstructed poetic metaphor. One of the reasons why the poetic metaphors in A Dream of Red Mansion translated by Yang Xianyi and Dynedale, Hawke and Minford have such a wide range of influences is that these translators are very proficient in the target language (English), having refined and accurate word selection. Reconstruction of poetic metaphors ultimately requires conceptual expression through language. The translator’s personal language preferences will affect the language expression type and style of poetic metaphors, thereby forming different translated texts. For example, for a poem by Qyazzirah Syeikh Ariffin, different Chinese netizens on the Internet gave different Chinese translations according to their language and stylistic preferences:
You say that you love rain, but you open your umbrella when it rains.
You say that you love the sun, but you find a shadow spot when the sun shines.
You say that you love the wind, but you close your windows when it blows.
This is why I am afraid, you say that you love me too.

Various Chinese translation:

1. 诗经版: 子言慕雨，启伞避之。
2. 2. 离骚版: 君乐雨兮启伞枝，
3. 3. 七言绝句版: 君乐风兮兰帐起，
4. 4. 七律版: 君乐吾兮吾心噬。

2.2.2 Familiarity with the culture of target language

Poetic metaphors have cultural attributes. The reconstruction of poetic metaphors in the target language should be based on the cultural environment of the target language. The translator’s familiarity with the culture of target language will affect whether the reconstructed poetic metaphors are compatible with the target language culture or not. In the translation of poetic metaphors, no matter whether domesticating translation and foreignizing translation is adopted, it must be ensured that the reconstructed poetic metaphors cannot conflict with the culture of target language.

For example, in the reconstruction of the thematic poetic metaphor “Personal desire is nothingness” in the poetry Haoliaoge of A Dream of Red Mansions, Hawke and Minford’s translation uses the word “salvation” to express the poetic image of “immortal”, which provides a Christian cultural orientation for the construction of poetic metaphor, indicating that the translator takes more consideration of the cultural cognitive experience of the target language readers and conforms to the Christian cultural context (Xiao, 2009, pp. 242-243). However, Wonthat (Wonthat, 2003, pp. 28-29) (วรทศัน) chose “ʔa33ma33ra33tai33 (Indra)” as the main image of the whole poem in the Thai translation of “A Dream of Red Mansions”, and provided a Theravada Buddhism cultural orientation for the reconstruction of poetic metaphor. This reconstructed poetic metaphor fully integrated into the Thai Theravada Buddhist cultural environment, which makes its reconstructed poetic metaphors well accepted and recognized by the target language users (that is, the Thai people). Suppose, if translator put the image “salvation” in the Thai translation and put “ʔa33ma33ra33tai33 (Indra)” in the English translation, it would lead to cultural maladjustment or even cultural conflict, which would make it impossible to achieve good translation effect.

2.2.3 Personal encyclopedia knowledge reserve

Poetic metaphor is a cognitive means, so its reconstruction involves not only intra-lingual knowledge but also a large amount of encyclopedic knowledge. The reserve of translators’ encyclopedic knowledge about the target society will affect the reconstruction of poetic metaphors to a certain extent. Translators can better choose appropriate imagery to reconstruct poetry metaphors only if they have a richness of encyclopedic knowledge about the society. The encyclopedic knowledge should include both the cultural environment of the source language’s society and the cultural environment of the target language’s society. For example, in the English
translation of the thematic poetic metaphor “Personal desire is nothingness” in the poetry *Haoliaoge of A Dream of Red Mansions*, the translator should have both a rich knowledge base of Chinese society and a rich knowledge base of Western society.

### 2.3 Principles of Reconstructing Poetic Metaphor

In the process of translating poetic metaphors using conceptual integration theory, the translator must follow the following principles when reconstructing poetic metaphors in the target language:

#### 2.3.1 Semantic consistency principle

The so-called semantic consistency principle means that the semantic content expressed by the poetic metaphor reconstructed in the target language must be consistent with the semantic content expressed by the poetic metaphor in the source language. Of course, we can’t require the two to be 100% semantically consistent, because translation between languages will cause loss of some information; however, translators must minimize the differences between the two in order to more accurately convey the original semantic content. For example, in the translation of the thematic poetic metaphor “Personal desire is nothingness” in the poetry *Haoliaoge of A Dream of Red Mansions*, whether it is the “Immortals” selected by Yang Xianyi and Dynedale, or the “salvation” selected by Hawke and Minford, or “ʔa33ma33ra33tai33 (Indra)” selected by Wonthatas the main image of their respective reconstructed poetic metaphors, all of these are closely linked to the original text means, that is “Don’t be obsessed with everything and make your body and mind uncomfortable”, making the reconstructed poetic metaphor consistent with the semantic content of the poetic metaphor in the original text.

#### 2.3.2 Cultural adaptation principle

The cultural adaptation principle means that the poetic metaphor reconstructed in the target language cannot conflict with the culture of the society that the target language is used, and it must be well integrated into the culture of the society that the target language is used. Only when the reconstructed poetic metaphors are adapted to the cultural environment of the society that the target language is used, they can be accepted and recognized by target language users, and the effect and purpose of translating and disseminating information can be achieved. Such as in the reconstruction of the thematic poetic metaphor “Personal desire is nothingness” in the poetry *Haoliaoge of A Dream of Red Mansions*, whether the Christian cultural orientation chosen by Hawke and Minford or the Theravada Buddhism cultural orientation selected by Wonthat, all of them follows the principle of cultural adaptation, making the reconstructed poetic metaphors better integrated into the respective cultural environment of the society that the target languages are used.

#### 2.3.3 Universality principle

The universality principle means that the poetic metaphors reconstructed in the target language must be universal and avoid obscurity. Only those universal poetic metaphors can be better accepted and understood by the great majority readers. Therefore, translators must understand the habits and preferences of the audience when reconstructing poetic metaphors, and try to reconstruct the poetic metaphors using the audience’s favorite images. For example, when Hawke and Minford and Wonthat reconstructed the thematic poetic metaphor of “Personal desire is nothingness” in the poetry *Haoliaoge of A Dream of Red Mansions*, the metaphoric images they choose are widely known by their target groups, so that they can be well accepted and recognized by target language users.
2.4 Summary of Poetic Metaphor Translation Model Based on the Conceptual Integration Theory

The above content discusses in detail how to use the concept integration theory to complete the translation of poetic metaphors. It also discusses the various factors that affect the translation of poetic metaphors and the principles that need to be followed when reconstructing poetic metaphors in the target language. Here, we will use the diagram to summarize the poetic metaphor translation model based on the conceptual integration theory as follows:

*Figure 2.* The diagram the poetic metaphor translation model based on the conceptual integration theory.
4. Conclusion and Some Discussions

At present, there are a lot of translation theories or translation models for poetic metaphor translation. However, for some of the essential problems of poetic metaphor translation, many translation theories or translation models cannot give some widely accepted answers, such as the problems of translatability of poetic metaphor, the literal translation and free translation, the strategies of domesticating translation and foreignizing translation, semantic equivalence, etc.

In fact, the root of these arguments is the definition of meaning. The objectivist school thinks that meaning is external and objective, so poetic metaphors are fully translatable, and semantic equivalence is the criterion for evaluating the quality of translations. However, the subjective school believes that meaning is inherently subjective, and different people will have different understandings, so poetic metaphors are difficult to translate. The development of cognitive linguistics has brought a new perspective to the resolution of these arguments. Cognitive semantics considers meaning to be the result of the interaction among the objective world, human cognition and Language (or linguistic signs). Meaning comes from people’s experience of the objective world, and its representation is encyclopedic (Lakoff, 2017). Therefore, as a conceptual structure for expressing meaning, poetic metaphor is translatable. However, it involves human cognition and is the result of the interaction of subjectivity and objectivity. So, it cannot achieve complete equivalence of meaning expression during translation, and there is bound to be some loss of information. And the translation result must have the personal mental style of the translator.

Based on the semantic view of cognitive semantics, this paper proposes that the translation of poetic metaphors is actually a process of conceptual integration; both construing and reconstruction involve conceptual integration. Poetic metaphor is constructed in a non-linear semantic blending processing through conceptual integration. When translating poetic metaphor, guided by the concept of semantic encyclopedia, using the conceptual integration theory to realize the construing of the meaning of poetic metaphor through the reverse derivation of the meaning construction process of poetic metaphor will help translator accurately understand the true connotation of poetic metaphor. And then, using concept integration theory to reconstruct poetic metaphor in the target language, which is back to the human’s experience of the external world and the process of conceptualization, which is another process of conceptual integration. Therefore, it is an inevitable choice to translate poetic metaphor based on conceptual integration theory.

At the same time, this article also summarizes the cognitive processes and encyclopedic knowledge involved in the use of conceptual integration theory to construe and reconstruct poetic metaphors in the process of translating poetic metaphors. This, on the one hand, enhances the operability and realization of “the poetic metaphor translation model based on the conceptual integration theory”. On the other hand, it explains why there are so many personalities in the translation results for a same poetic metaphor.

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