

A Cognitive Approach to Personification in Chinese Courtroom Discourse

Chunfang Huang¹ Dandan Wu²

¹Southwest University of Political Science and Law, afang609@163.com

²Southwest University of Political Science and Law

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Conceptual metaphor is not merely a way of rhetoric but a matter of thought and action. It is categorized into three types: structural metaphor, ontological metaphor, and orientational metaphor. Personification is one kind of ontological metaphor. It means that a non-human entity is conceptualized in terms of human motivations, characteristics, and activities, indicating that we understand our experience in terms of persons. Personification is identified as one of the most common and instinctive metaphorical expressions because the shared and basic experience of human beings provides an opportunity to express many different ideas by comparing things to living entities (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). It involves a cross-domain mapping between a human source domain and a non-human target domain.

In this paper, the authors collect some cases in Chinese courtroom, which are from this website <http://tingshen.court.gov.cn/>. Then, based on the methods for linguistic metaphor identification such as MIP (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) and MIPVU (Steen et al., 2010), the authors extract some personification, and study the working mechanism and functions of personification in courtroom discourse. This paper has some findings as follows: (1) categories of personification in courtroom discourse include conventionalized personification, novel personification, default personification and personification-with-metonymy; (2) the working mechanism of personification is mapping which includes three aspects: domains, cross-domain mapping and invariance principle; (3) the functions of personification in courtroom discourse is mainly composed of rhetorical function, cognitive function and social function. The study proves that personification is pervasive in Chinese courtroom discourse and is inseparable from people's daily life. The result of the study can contribute to a deep understanding of personification in courtroom and broaden the application scope of the theory of conceptual metaphor. Meanwhile, it is of some help to discourse analysis.

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