

A Comparative Study of the Metaphors of hand in Chinese and Shona

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I. INTRODUCTION

Hand is a very important part of the human body that always directly or indirectly involved in manual tasks. Other body part would also solely or partially depend on the control of the hand in order to complete their tasks. We can imagine workers constructing a building much, help was needed from each other and during the primitive days manual labor was essential, yet working together guaranteed success, in other words, most tasks depends on the contribution of hands. The histories the construction of the famous Great Wall of China and the Great Zimbabwe Ruins are marked by use of manual labor; hard working and cooperation. Heine in Mberi (2003: 78) asserts that the human body provides one of the most important models of expressing concepts. For example, one body part, besides having its own specific function, can be seen as complementary to functions of the other parts of the body and at times also plays a protective or caring role towards others. The “hand” has been used in various metaphoric expressions to describe several human behaviors in both Chinese and Shona languages. This research therefor, seeks to compare the expressions and meaning of the metaphor “hand” as portrayed in both the Chinese and Shona languages. According to Kovecses (2002:165) it is possible for different languages and cultures to conceptualize specific concepts in similar ways. His claim is that functions of body parts are universal, therefor the near-universality of such metaphors, is motivated by the universality of the functions of the different parts of a human body. However, there is a massive cultural distance between Chinese and Shona. The two languages represent two diverse cultures that are characterized by different ways of thinking, hence are difference in the use of body metaphor may be expected. This study will not only help learners to have knowledge of the similar and different uses of the metaphor of “hand” between Chinese and Shona languages, but will also help learners to learn and properly use these phrases.

II. METHODOLOGY

We collected Shona expression of “hand” metaphor from Shona and Chinese reference material. For Chinese we depended more from research works done by other scholars. For Shona we depended more on a published book *Ngatidzidzei Zvirungamutauro* by Viriri, which have catalogue of Shona metaphors, idiom and proverbs. From the collected data, we compared the use of the metaphors of “hand” as expressed in both languages. The similarities were synchronically discussed, while the differences were discussed separately.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Metaphor of hand is one of the mostly used in Chinese language. Liu JieShao (2014) did a survey on the body parts idioms in Dictionary of Chinese Idioms. He ranked the body parts in terms of their frequency of appearance. Of the 12 body parts under survey, the hand was on sixth position. In Some studies, several body parts were discussed collectively, while some focus on individual body parts. Some scholars did comparative studies with other languages, for instances Li Hailian (2012) did a comparative study on the Chinese and Korean metaphorical idioms of body parts. Liu JieShao (2014) studied body metaphors in English and Chinese idioms. Those specifically focusing on metaphors of “hand” may include Xuyi (2012) who compared and analyzed Chinese and English Metaphor and Metonymy of "Hand". Li NanNan (2017) analyzed the Polysemy of "Hand" in Chinese and English metaphors and metonymy. With regard to the Shona language, at the moment, no study has specifically focused on metaphors of “hand”. Research on metaphors concentrated on metaphors in a broader sense without narrowing to a particular type of metaphors for instance, Chakanja (), who did a comparison of body based conceptual metaphors between English and Shona. This study therefor narrows down metaphors to do with body parts particularly the hand mainly because it is an area that has remained undug in the Shona language moreover in comparison to the Chinese metaphors’ of hand not forgetting the richness of culture that is deposited in both languages.

IV. SIMILARITIES

(1) Help —In both Chinese and Shona, a hand is used to express help. In Chinese “*zhushou*”(help hand) is used to mean helper. In Shona there are a number of sayings which convey the element of help being associated with the hands.

When we look at the saying *ndipe ruoko/usangopeta maoko/ tambanudza maoko/* there is the saying “*ruoko rwaMwari*”(God’s hand) means “God’s grace”. *Ndipe ruoko* give me a hand which means give me help. “*Usangopeta maoko*” which means don’t always fold your hands. It is a phrase normally used to encourage people to help one another. *Tambanudza maoko* means the opposite which conveys an act of giving. When looking at the saying *ruoko rwaMWARI*. The Shona people believe in *Mwari* who is a helping hand in their everyday lives. The word “*ruoko*” hand symbolizes the helping hand of Yahweh.

(2) Technical ability/skill —The Chinese expression. “*拿手 nashou*”; directly translated to “take hand”, refers to someone having certain technical ability. For instance, “*ta zai xiuxiezi hen nashou*”(he is skilled at repairing shoes). Another is “*shoufa*”, means skill. This expression has already become a dead metaphor in Chinese language, meaning it has already lost its metaphoric force and has gained acceptance in the formal language. In Shona we have “*mabasa emaoko*” which means those jobs that require human skill.

(3) Authority /control—The two languages use “hand” as a metaphor for control. For example, in the phrase “everything is in my hands”. For Chinese we quote an extract from a novel *Thunderstorm* by Cao Yu, where the character Lu Da Hai says: “*现在你的命还在我的手里 xianzai nide ming zai wode shouli*”(your life is in my hands). Similarly, in Shona one can say “*upenyu hwako huri mumaoko angu*”. In the Shona language the phrase symbolizes a high level of authority, it basically means one has control of the power of life and death.

(4) Behavior/practices/innocence —Chinese and Shona use the cleanness or dirtiness of hands to metaphorically mean good or bad behaviors respectively. In Chinese there is “*脏手 zangshou*”(dirty hands) and “*shoujiao bu gangjing*”. (unclean hands and feet), both mean “bad deeds”. In Shona there is *maoko akachena./ maoko ake akabata zvinoera or zvakawanda*. Clean hands refer to innocence in the Shona language. “*Kubata zvakawanda or kubata zvinoera*” means indecent exposure, or having done taboo things it is basically associated more with bad things. There is also a phrase known as “*kugeza maoko*”, which means giving up or leaving it alone.

(5) Unite/cooperate— the separation or putting together of hands have also been associated with co-operation or uniting and disunity respectively. In Chinese, the metaphor “*分手 fenshou*” meaning “breakup of a lovers” have already been accepted in the standard language. In Shona “*-isa maoko pamwechete*” (put hands together) which is normally used in reference to putting collective effort to solve a problem.

(6) Measurement—Both languages use “hand” as a measure of things collectable by hands, just like in English. For instance, “a handful of peanuts” in Chinese “*抓一手花生米 zhua yi shou hua sheng mi*” (grab a hand of peanuts) and in Shona one can similarly say “*nokorawo ruoko rumwechete rwenzungu*”.

(7) Labor / obtain/ Achieve— We found that in some expressions Chinese and Shona tend to use “hand” to refer to obtaining results or gains after an effort. However, the phrases in the two languages have slight differences. In Chinese *空手而归 kongshou er gui*, in Shona people have a similar expression “*kudzoka ari maoko chete/kudzoka akabata maoko*” (coming back empty handed or returning with nothing). In Chinese and Shona “hand” has been used metaphorically as a basic tool for labour. Although humans use various parts of the body either collectively or individually to labour and obtain achievements, but it is the hand that is used to represent all other body parts. In Chinese there is the expression “*白手起家 baishou qijia*” (build from white hands), which means to start from scratch. In Shona they say “*kuita ndakasungwa maoko*”(do something with hands tied up).

(8) Take action—*动手 dongshou*(move hands) commonly refers to starting work or fighting. In Shona “*-ve nechioko chegudo*” (have baboon’s hand) means he or she always fights others.

V. DIFFERENCES

Chinese and Shona however have some expressions that are not similar in the way the metaphor of “hand” is used.

VI. CHINESE

(1) Direction or orientation— 在我左手边的就是世界最高的电视塔 zai wo zuoshoubian jiushi shijie zuida de dianshitan(from Li NanNan, 2017:)]

(2) Convenient to carry—手册 shouce(handbook); 手提包 shoutibao(handbag) (3) Stingy— 手紧 shoujin (tight-feasted) means stingy.

VII. SHONA

(1) Formal greeting—isa maoko(put up hands). The verb “put” itself is also metaphoric. This expression is derived from the Shona culture of clapping hands as a formal way of greeting. (2) Steal—ve neruoko (have a hand. In shona to say “one has a hand” means that person has the habit of stealing. (3) Pay condolences— bata maoko(touch hand) . Specially used in Shona to refer to shaking hands as way of expressing condolences. (4) Acceptance— tambira nemaoko maviri(receive with two hands) .The phrase means to value and accept someone or an idea. (5) Care — bata nemaoko maviri(hold with two hands) means to take good care of something or someone to avoid losing it. In Shona there is the phrase “bata neseri kweruoko” (hold with the outside of the palm). This means to ill-treat someone.

VIII. DISCUSSION

From the above comparison, it can be clearly seen that in both languages the metaphors of “hand” are closely related to the practical function of the hand in one way or the other. The “Hand” is associated with “help” probably because in everyday life people in societies most frequently call for each others’ help, most of it being manual, particularly during the time of primitive societies when most expressions were created. The more people there are the more the hands and the easier the task. Hence the “hand” metaphor of hand is associated with cooperation. In the same manner labour and achievement has also been associated with the metaphor of hand. This is partly because humans depend on working in order to obtain financial and material gains, and human beings basically depend on hands to perform various kinds of tasks at work. When referring to technical skills the involvement and the use of hands can not be ignored. One can hardly think of any technical skills done by any other body parts. It is for this same reason why technical skill and arts are also associated with the hand because they usually have to involve the dexterity of “hands” . Hands are naturally designed to handle and control. They have fingers that are flexible to control and hold. The hands can flexibly turn any direction from the pivot of the shoulder and inwards from the elbow joints. This is why humans depend on the hands for control. According to science hands function as organs designed for physical manipulation of the physical environment. If two kids are fighting for a ball the one who does not use his hands will not take the ball away. So, hands are the major limb used for catching grabbing clutching; snatching; gathering; push and pulling; moulding and others. For this reason, the hand is viewed as controller, and has thus been used as metaphor for “controlling/authority”. Having something in your hands means you have already obtained it, it then comes down to whether you choose to give it away or to keep. In other words, whatever you might want to do with it you have power to do it.

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