

AN ANALYSIS OF “SORGHUM” METAPHORS IN THE NOVEL “HÓNG GĀOLIÁNG JIĀZÚ”: A COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS APPROACH

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Abstract

《红高粱家族》“Hóng Gāoliáng Jiāzú” is a highly popular and influential novel written by the 2012 Nobel Literature Prize winning Chinese author Mo Yan. This research aims to study conceptual metaphors about “Sorghum” as reflected in metaphorical expressions used in this novel. The analysis was based on the rationale for implementing cognitive semantics and Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) developed by Lakoff and Johnson (2003). The results showed two categories of metaphors: (1) SORGHUM IS A HUMAN BEING (2) SORGHUM IS AN INANIMATE THING. The mapping from the source domains HUMAN BEING and INANIMATE THING to the target domain SORGHUM are possible due to the existence of similarities between the two domains. One part of the features of the source domains is highlighted in each of the distinct “Sorghum” metaphors. These metaphors are influenced by various factors such as cultural, social, and cognitive factors, all playing important roles in the formation of “Sorghum” metaphors.

Keywords: Cognitive Linguistics, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, “Sorghum” Metaphors, Mo Yan, Red Sorghum, Modern Chinese Literature

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INTRODUCTION

Metaphors are important because of their reflection of feelings, minds and attitudes of the individual which appear in every part of our life. Meanwhile, metaphors reflect culture and are restricted to social culture and natural environment in the choice of signifiers. Although metaphor research has a long history, the new era for the study of metaphors has emerged since Lakoff and Johnson put forward the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) in 1980. It contrasts with theories that regard metaphors as a special literary method in the traditional view to achieve artistic and rhetoric effects. However, from the perspective of Lakoff and Johnson (2003), metaphors are not a particular language expression method. Instead, metaphorical thinking deeply grows in human's brains and widely appears in the communication of people's daily life. In other words, metaphors do not only exist in language, but also such metaphorical expressions becomes possible because of the existence of metaphors in human cognition, which comes from people's thoughts, conceptual systems, experiences, as well as various actions. Orücü (2012) claims that metaphors enable people to configure, in a more comprehensive and concrete way, the ambiguous concepts in daily life and during this process, playing the role of a strong mental model. Therefore, metaphors in cognitive linguistics means conceptual metaphors, which are studied as systems of human conceptualization, operates deep within human thought and cognition. Such an important cognitive device, which is a vital part of our lives, is

indispensable to our cognitive activities.

Historically, China was the world's first nation to fight against fascist forces beginning on 18th September 1931 when Japanese troops began the invasion of northeastern China. China's anti-Japanese war, as an important part of the World Anti-Fascist War, eventually achieved victory on 15th August 1945 after more than 14 years of fighting. The year 2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the victory in the Anti-Japanese aggression war and the victory in the world Anti-Fascist war. Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasizes research into the significance of China's resistance against the Japanese invasion and its role in World War II and he also has called for more high-quality academic works and popular literature on China's war history ("Xi underscores researchers", 2015). Moreover, Mo Yan is the first Chinese writer to win the Nobel Prize in literature, which he won in 2012. His well-known novel 《红高粱家族》 (Hóng Gāoliáng Jiāzú), written in 1986, has an extensive popularity both in China and overseas. It describes a dynamic Anti-Japanese War in which people fought against the Japanese invaders' aggression bravely and actively in the author's hometown of Gaomi, a small ordinary township in northeastern China, where red sorghum is spread all over the farming area. It not only displays a horrifying sense of the battlefield, but also tells a legendary love story between "my grandparents" who are the representatives of folk heroes. The war scenes are full of blood, death, crying, and love which are all clearly demonstrated by depicting sorghum in front of readers. Red sorghum, as a specific plant in northeast

Gaomi, has its own complicated features which symbolize the legendary generation of people in Gaomi to eulogize their meaningful life as well as the courage resolve to fight against the fascist invasion.

For the 《红高粱家族》 (Hóng Gāoliáng Jiāzú) (MoYan, 2012), previous studies (e.g., Yu, 2014; Zheng, 2013; Wang, 2012) always pay attention to traditional literature appreciation concerning the aesthetic value and literacy angle. However, it is rare to find studies on metaphors especially on “Sorghum” metaphors, as one of metaphors of plants, from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. According to the cognitive linguistic approach (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003), the internal structure of metaphors is composed of two conceptual domains in which one domain is understood in terms of another. These two domains have special names, namely the source domain and the target domain. The conceptual domain from which we draw a metaphorical expression to understand another conceptual domain is called the source domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain. The attempt is made to understand the target domain through the use of the source domain. Mapping from the source domain to the target domain is possible because of the existence of similarities between the two domains. Depending on a fixed set of correspondences between the two domains, sorghum, as a target domain, needs to be understood by using different aspects of the source domain. The reason why mapping of “Sorghum” metaphors is a process is that it requires not only the objective establishment of

similarities between the source domain and target domain, but also the use of the existing and implicit thought, ideology, and intention of authors. Consequently, under this circumstance, this article is to study “Sorghum” metaphors from a cognitive perspective, namely, to find mapping mechanisms of different kinds of “Sorghum” metaphors in this novel as well as the factors which influence the formation of such metaphors. With regard to this purpose, it to some extent supplements the study of cognitive linguistics, especially enriching the plant metaphors research scope. It is beneficial to the linguistic learners, both Chinese native speakers and foreigner students, to have a better understanding of Mo Yan’s novels and helpful for cross-cultural communication as well.

Research questions

1. What are the categorizations of “Sorghum” Metaphors in the Chinese novel 《红高粱家族》 (Hóng Gāoliáng Jiāzú) according to the conceptual metaphor theory?
2. What are the motivations of these types of “Sorghum” metaphors?

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Conceptual Metaphor Theory

According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), a conceptual metaphor refers to a conceptual system where there exists a set of correspondences between a source domain and a target domain, and such

correspondences are technically defined as mappings, which are just a series of mappings from the source domain to the target domain. As a typical example of a conceptual metaphor, consider the example LIFE IS A JOURNEY with the following cross-domain correspondences.

From the figure, concepts in the source domain of JOURNEY (travelers, vehicle, baggage, obstacles, distance covered, destination termination, etc) correspond systematically to concepts in the other domain, which is the target (persons, birth, personal problems, external impediments, accomplishments, life purpose, death, etc.) Thus, there are ontological correspondences between these two domains. And metaphors from the perspective of cognitive linguistics are not just a way of expressing one kind of thing in terms of another, but a way of thinking about things (Ungerer and Schmid, 2001). That is, people are usually become aware of abstract and unfamiliar things by using something concrete and familiar. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) stated that the essence of a metaphor is understanding and expressing one kind of thing in terms of another. And it is also the

similarities between the source domain and the target domain of a metaphor, which are regarded as the foundation of two domains.

Moreover, Kövecses (2002: 79) claims that when metaphors focus on some aspects of a target concept, we can say that it highlights that or those aspects. In other words, two concepts, metaphorical highlighting and metaphorical utilization, are brought in to explain the partial nature of metaphorical mappings. People pay more attention to one or some aspects of the target domain, while other aspects are hidden in the process when we understand the entire metaphor (Wang Qi, 2011: 15). To be more specific, an existing mapping between domain A and B can be only partial. It means that a part of concept B is mapped onto target A and only a part of target A is involved in the mapping from B. This relates to an important idea in Conceptual Metaphor Theory: hiding and highlighting of Lakoff and Johnson (2003: 10 -14). For instance, invoking the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY highlights the progressive aspects of life which include birth, life purpose, and death, but hides the values of people in their own

Mappings for LIFE IS JOURNEY

JOURNEY (source domain)	Mapping	LIFE (target domain)
travelers	→	persons
vehicle	→	birth
baggage	→	personal problems
obstacles	→	external impediments
distance covered	→	accomplishments
destination	→	life purpose
termination	→	death

life. On the contrary, the metaphor LIFE IS A PLAY highlights the component aspects of it such as actors, make - up, audiences, and roles, etc. while hiding its objective aspects. In this way, one metaphor just reveals one perspective of a concept or a conceptual domain. People utilize different images, different aspects of a source domain in understanding a target domain.

2. A Brief Introduction to the Chinese Version of 《红高粱家族》 (Hóng Gāoliáng Jiāzú)

《红高粱家族》 (Hóng Gāoliáng Jiāzú) (Mo Yan, 2012) was written by Mo Yan (a pseudonym for Guan Moye) - the first Chinese writer to win the Nobel Prize in literature. The novel 《红高粱家族》 (Hóng Gāoliáng Jiāzú), as his representative composition, also has profound value to be elaborately introduced and researched from different perspectives. Geographically, Gaomi, as Mo Yan's hometown is a township of eastern Shandong province in China. Such land is covered with red sorghum, describing the memory of childhood, hometown knowledge, and his national history. As he stated, "I pick up the pen, planning to create a novel in the setting of an island. But the scenes emerging from my mind were always sorts of soil, river, plants, especially the sea-like red sorghum fields of my hometown, instead of the pictures of an island." (Mo Yan, 1993: 21-25). Politically, Mo Yan metaphorically reconstructed the immensity of sorghum fields in order to create an image of original life, full of primitive energy and strength.

Red Sorghum is viewed as a manifestation of the Gaomi people in the Anti-Japanese War, full of bloody vitality, national spirit, and the enthusiasm of patriotism. It is understood that certain red sorghums in this novella resembled members of the narrator's family. They provided food for his grandpa and his team, and the act of memorable remembering occurring in the sorghum field. They remain powerful and stubborn in sharp contrast to the hybrid sorghums which are bereft of the initial attributes of the pure-red sorghums. In terms of social context, born in a family of "upper-middle class peasants", Mo Yan's schooling was interrupted and he was dispatched to the countryside due to the Cultural Revolution in 1976. During that time, he joined the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and has since been working as a political commissar. So his literary career began soon afterwards and his work reached an important landmark in 1986, with the publication of a series of novellas later compiled into *Red sorghum* (Braester, 2003: 542). Braester (2003: 541) also pointed out the novella, 《红高粱家族》 (Hóng Gāoliáng Jiāzú), contains themes and stylistic features that would become central to Mo Yan's writing, such as life in a back-water village and from an outcast's point of view. Therefore, all these three factors play an important role in demonstrating the narrator's background for creating this work. His passionate hatred and love for his hometown in the countryside metaphorically describes his oscillation between the values of the countryside, or natural earth, and the values of the city (Lu, 1993: 192).

The book is made up of five chapters

that unfold and interweave in Gaomi in several turbulent decades in the 20th century, with depictions of bandit culture, the Japanese occupation, and the harsh conditions endured by poor farm workers. Displaying vivid life consciousness and embodying national spirit, 《红高粱家族》(Hóng Gāoliáng Jiāzú) tells a love story about Commander Yu Zhan'ao and Grandma Dai Fenglian, and depicts their legendary experiences of fighting against the Japanese invaders. According to Booker (2015: 206), this composition describes the resistance against Japanese invaders in 1939, yet unlike previous accounts of the war, the novel does not depict unmitigated heroism. Instead, the characters are humanly fallible, and the narrative is ironic and self-mocking. The novel is also characterized by strong folk flavors, coupled with the informal languages and colloquial dialects. The description of Mo Yan reflects his ideas and thoughts concerning Chinese

traditional social culture by offering newfangled and unique metaphors. Based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory, readers are not only capable of having an unusual feeling of reading to appreciate its aesthetic fascination and but also to comprehensively understand the conceptual meanings.

Data Collection and Research Methodology

The data for this research are all from Mo Yan's Chinese novel 《红高粱家族》(Hóng Gāoliáng Jiāzú) (Mo Yan, 2012). The novel must be read several times to find most of the sentences and phrases relating to sorghum metaphors. In order to assure the objectiveness of the research and reduce errors, the researcher points out these sorghum metaphors in whole text segments using a table and the instance sentences are as follows:

Page	Chinese	Meaning	Source Domain
32	无边的高粱迎着更高更亮的太阳，脸庞鲜红，不胜娇羞。	A boundless expanse of sorghum greeted the reddening sun, which rose ever higher, grew ever brighter.	appearance
34	去年初夏的高粱在堤外忧悒沉重地发着呆。	Last year's early-summer sorghum stood spellbound beyond the dike, sombre and melancholy.	behaviour and action
34	压断揉烂的高粱流出的青苗味道，被夜雾浸淫，在清晨更加浓烈。遍野的高粱都在痛哭。	The smell of green shoots released by the crushed and broken sorghum, steeped in the night mist, rose pungent in the morning air. Sorghum everywhere was crying bitterly.	emotion

(Based on “Hóng Gāoliáng Jiāzú” by Mo Yan, p. 32 - 34, Shanghai Wenyi Press, 2012)

In analyzing data, based on the purpose of the study, firstly, the collected data were classified into several types following cognitive linguistic theories on metaphor, especially Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). After determining certain typical sentences and phrases which contain sorghum metaphors, each of them was analyzed and interpreted in detail from cognitive perspectives with the assistance of the English version of *Red Sorghum* (Goldblatt, 1993). Before Mo Yan’s winning of the Nobel Prize for Literature, Howard Goldblatt (born in 1939) had already devoted himself to his translation career and had become well-known as a literacy translator of modern and contemporary Chinese literature (Zhang, 2005: 75). He introduced readers in the English-speaking world to numerous Chinese writers through his translations, especially the now world-famous writer Mo Yan. Professor Zhang (2005: 76) commends Goldblatt’s translation works, for being natural, and flexible, and extremely faithful to the spirit of the original text. Mo Yan (2005: 170) also speaks highly of Goldblatt’s translation that it matches his original literacy works very well. That is the reason why I choose this English version of *Red Sorghum* to serve as a tool to help foreign readers accurately comprehend the original metaphors. By means of such qualitative analysis, this study strives to determine the categorizations of sorghum metaphors and all the kinds of factors that affect the formation of sorghum metaphors that will be eventually emerge.

Data Analysis

Categorizations of “Sorghum” Metaphors

“Sorghum” Metaphors play essential roles in the Chinese novel 《红高粱家族》 (Hóng Gāoliáng Jiāzú). Mo Yan has made a complete description of the “Sorghum” Metaphors, externalized the features and symbolic meaning implied in the “Sorghum” metaphors as the target to describe and discuss. Based on Lakoff and Johnson’s Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and the constructing features of these metaphorical expressions in the Chinese novel 《红高粱家族》 (Hóng Gāoliáng Jiāzú), this paper attempts to categorize the “Sorghum” metaphors into two main types : SORGHUM IS A HUMAN BEING and SORGHUM IS AN INANIMATE THING. There are totally 93 sentences used to express “Sorghum” metaphors. The majority of the “Sorghum” metaphors are used to construct the SORGHUM IS A HUMAN BEING idea, which take up more than two - thirds of total quality leaving the rest of metaphors to express the SORGHUM IS AN INANIMATE THING idea. Mapping from the source domains “HUMAN BEING” and “INANIMATE THING” to the target domain “SORGHUM” are possible because of the existence of similarities between the two domains. Besides, one part of features of the source domain is salient in each distinct “SORGHUM” metaphor and such features can be divided into different kinds of types as follows.

The Distribution of “Sorghum” Metaphors

Metaphors	Source Domain	Quality	
SORGHUM IS A HUMAN BEING	behavior and action	23	69
	context	10	
	appearance	9	
	character	6	
	color of blood	6	
	spirit and ideology	6	
	sound	4	
	emotion	3	
	desire	2	
SORGHUM IS AN INANIMATE THING	container	13	24
	natural phenomenon	6	
	object	3	
	situation	2	
Totally		93	

[SORGHUM IS A HUMAN BEING]

As regards conceptual metaphors, plants can be considered as a source domain in order to refer to the target domain. For human beings, people cultivate plants for a variety of purposes such as for eating, for pleasure, for making things, and so on (Kövecses, 2002: 17). Characteristics and different stages of growth that plants go through can map onto similar stages of human beings. However, human beings as higher-level creatures can use their own feelings to understand those of other lower-level non-human attributes. With the exception of human cognition, other creatures possess human's actions, appearance, characters

and thoughts in cognitive metaphors, namely, personification. Therefore, the conceptual metaphor “PLANTS ARE HUMAN BEINGS” is the guiding focus for analyzing in this section. In the novel 《红高粱家族》(Hóng Gāoliáng Jiāzú), sorghum as a species of plant also possesses such kinds of human-like attributes. It will be further discussed and the particular examples are given as follows.

1. Behavior and action

EX (1) 高粱与人一起等待着时间的花朵
结出果实。(Mo Yan, 2012 : 24)

Sorghum and men waited for time's
flower to bear fruit. (Goldblatt, 1993: 26)

EX (2) 去年初夏的高粱在堤外忧悒沉重地发着呆。(Mo Yan, 2012 : 34)

Last year's early-summer sorghum stood spellbound beyond the dike, sombre and melancholy. (Goldblatt, 1993: 35)

EX (3) 父亲感到奶奶的身体越来越沉重,高粱叶子毫不留情地绊着他,高粱叶子毫不留情地锯着他,他倒在地上,身上压着沉重的奶奶。(Mo Yan, 2012 : 71)

Grandma is getting heavier as the passing sorghum leaves lacerate him mercilessly. He falls, she falls on top of him. (Goldblatt, 1993: 70)

EX (4) 奶奶的脚趾痉挛,腹肌狂跳不止。当时为他们的革命行动呐喊助威的是生气蓬勃的高粱。(Mo Yan, 2012 : 93)

Her feet had cramped, her abdominal muscles had jerked madly. Their call to revolt had been aided by the vibrant sorghum. (Goldblatt, 1993: 92)

EX (5) 冲过去的那匹大洋马又困难地弯回来,高粱在马腩后痛苦挣扎着,有的断裂,有的弯曲,有的重新站起来。(Mo Yan, 2012 : 181)

The charging horse turned with difficulty and headed back, stalks of sorghum struggling bitterly against its rump, some bending and breaking, others snapping back into place. (Goldblatt, 1993: 178)

The five examples above seem to describe sorghum's behaviors and actions. However, they are not simple descriptions from the surface. Only people have the behaviors of "等待" (waited for), "发呆" (stood spellbound), "毫不留情地锯着" (lacerate mercilessly), "呐喊助威" (call to revolt had been aided) and "痛苦挣扎" (struggling bitterly). Such perception and experience of human's actions and behaviors help us to create

conceptual systems about sorghum in that particular context. Here, "sorghum" is the target domain and the series of highlighted verbs are from the source domain. Specifically, in example (5), people who are in the period of the Anti-Japanese War struggle bitterly due to suffering from the physical, psychological, and social impact of conditions such as broken sorghum stalks. The similarities between them lie on the fact that they both belong to be seriously wounded and confront difficulties bravely and tenaciously. The actions of human beings are mapped onto "sorghum" and the conceptual metaphor forms. Similarly, the other four behaviors can also be introduced as a source domain to refer to the target domain "sorghum".

2. Appearance

EX (6) 无边的高粱迎着更高更亮的太阳,脸庞鲜红,不胜娇羞。(Mo Yan, 2012: 32)

A boundless expanse of sorghum with the bright face greeted the reddening sun, which rose ever higher, grew ever brighter. (Goldblatt, 1993: 33)

EX (7) 我痛恨杂种高粱。杂种高粱好象永远都不会成熟。它永远半闭着那些灰绿色的眼睛。(Mo Yan, 2012 : 416)

How I loathe hybrid sorghum. Hybrid sorghum never seems to ripen. Its grey-green eyes seem never to be fully opened. (Goldblatt, 1993: 377)

The two examples that describe the appearance of two different kinds of sorghum use metaphorical linguistic expressions about the "PLANTS ARE HUMAN BEINGS" metaphor. From those examples above, we can see that body parts of humans can be used as a source

domain to map onto those of sorghum. The similarities between the appearances of human beings and those of sorghum are illustrated through using the exterior colors of pure-red sorghum and hybrid sorghum. Example (6) regards pure-red sorghum's appearance as “脸庞鲜红” (the bright face) of a person. This differs from example (6) and example (7) which do not use the facial appearance of human beings to refer to those of hybrid sorghum. The source domain is the humans' eyes which are seen as the window into the human mind and people sometimes can communicate their thoughts with their eyes. The characteristics of people who are mercenaries and have narrow thoughts can be used as a source domain, mapping onto those of hybrid sorghum with distinctive features like short-stalked, thick-stemmed, and grey-topped.

3. Character

EX (8) 奶奶欣慰地微笑着，看着湛蓝的、深不可测的天空，看着宽容温暖的、慈母般的高粱。(Mo Yan, 2012: 74)

Grandma smiles in gratitude, her eyes fixed on the azure sky, deep beyond imagining, and fixed on the warm, forgiving, motherly, nurturing sorghum around her. (Goldblatt, 1993: 74)

EX (9) 高粱高密辉煌,高粱凄婉可人,高粱爱情激荡。(Mo Yan, 2012: 2)

Tall and dense, Sorghum reeked of glory; cold and graceful, it promised enchantment; passionate and loving, it was tumultuous. (Goldblatt, 1993 : 4)

From the examples above, we can see that the personality characteristics of human beings can be mapped onto

those of sorghum in Northeastern Gaomi culture. Predecessors who settled down in Gaomi are regarded as “宽容温暖的、慈母般的” (the warm, forgiving, motherly, nurturing), “凄婉可人” (promised enchantment) and “爱情激荡” (passionate and loving). These kind of characteristics of Gaomi people become source domains to refer to red sorghum. Thus, we have such metaphorical expressions as the two examples above.

4. Spirit and ideology

EX (10) 杂种高粱空有高粱的名称，但没有高粱挺拔的秆；它们空有高粱的名称，但没有高粱辉煌的颜色。它们真正缺少的，是高粱的灵魂和风度。它们用它们晦暗不清、模棱两可的狭长脸庞污染着高密东北乡纯净的空气。(Mo Yan, 2012: 416)

The hybrid sorghum assume the name of sorghum, but are bereft of tall, straight stalks; they assume the name of sorghum, but are devoid of the dazzling sorghum colour. Lacking the soul and bearing of sorghum, they pollute the pure air of Northeast Gaomi Township with their dark, gloomy, ambiguous faces. (Goldblatt, 1993: 377)

EX (11) 在白马山之阳，墨水河之阴，还有一株纯种的红高粱，你要不惜一切努力找到它。你高举着它去闯荡你的荆榛丛生、虎狼横行的世界，它是你的护身符，也是我们家族的光荣的图腾和我们高密东北乡传统精神的象征！(Mo Yan, 2012: 417)

Besides the yang of White Horse Mountain and the yin of the Black Water River, there is also a stalk of pure-red sorghum which you must sacrifice everything, if necessary, to find. When you have found it, wield it high as you re-enter a world of dense brambles and wild predators. It is your talisman, as

well as our family's glorious totem and a symbol of the heroic spirit of Northeast Gaomi Township! (Goldblatt, 1993: 378)

Spirit relates to mind, soul, and feelings that influence the will of people. Ideology is about the way in which people think about the world and their ideal concept of how to live in the world. So both spirit and ideology are invisible and abstract, but subconsciously hidden in human's minds. In the two examples above, the source domain of "HUMAN'S SPIRITS AND IDEOLOGY" is mapped onto the target domain "SORGHUM". For people, spirits can be loving or hateful, helping or hurting, lofty or ignoble, naive or evil. Chinese people who have positive national spirit just like the pure-red sorghum which provides its everything for people. They devoted their time, energy, and even their precious life to safeguard China's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security. Conversely, someone who lacks such soul and bearing, just like the hybrid sorghum, destroys the environment of Northeast Gaomi Township. Thus, with the conceptual metaphor "SORGHUM IS HUMAN'S SPIRIT AND IDEOLOGY" created, it is better to understand the implied meaning of why "纯种的红高粱" (pure-red sorghum) is "护身符" (talisman), "光荣的图腾" (glorious totem), and "高密东北乡传统精神的象征" (a symbol of the heroic spirit of Northeast Gaomi Township).

5. Emotion

EX (12) 压断揉烂的高粱流出的青苗味道，被夜雾浸淫，

在清晨更加浓烈。遍野的高粱都在痛哭。(Mo Yan, 2012 : 34)
The smell of green shoots released by the crushed and broken sorghum, steeped in the night mist, rose pungent in the morning air. Sorghum everywhere was crying bitterly. (Goldblatt, 1993: 35)

EX (13) 密集的高粱秸子碰得火把四处溅油，那些半干的高粱叶子，着了油，委委屈屈地燃烧起来。高粱们在火之上，低垂着沉重的头，发出喑哑的哭泣。(Mo Yan, 2012: 143)
The aggrieved dry leaves crackled and burned when they were splattered, and as the fires spread, the stalks bowed sorghum's heavy heads and wept hoarsely. (Goldblatt, 1993: 141)

Humans have emotions and feelings about certain kinds of environments, and express their emotions in different ways. They laugh when they are happy and cry when they are upset and sad. For the examples above, the words "痛哭" (was crying bitterly) and "喑哑的哭泣" (wept hoarsely) are used to describe the sorrowful and despairing mood of human beings. It presents a person who feels hopeless and can do nothing to improve a difficult or worrying situation, even facing the situation of dying. The words used here refer to the sorghum that is going to die and process the emotions to endure and tolerate just like the suffering Chinese people experienced in resisting the Japanese troops' invasion.

6. Desire

EX (14) 如果秋水泛滥，高粱地成了一片汪洋，暗红色的高粱头颅擎在浑浊的黄水里，顽强地向苍天呼吁。

(Mo Yan, 2012: 416)

If the autumn rains are heavy, the fields turn into a swampy sea, the red tips of sorghum rising above the muddy yellow water, appealing stubbornly to the blue sky above. (Goldblatt, 1993: 378)

According to Kövecses (2002: 21), desire is similar to emotion in terms of metaphorical conceptualization. It is also comprehended as a force, not only as a physical one, but also often as a physiological force like hunger or thirst. It is also often understood in terms of heat. In terms of example (14), the writer uses the phrase “顽强地向苍天呼吁” (appeal stubbornly to the blue sky above) which related to human’s burning desire in the description of sorghum. Actually, sorghum does not have such kind of emotional concept to describe these kinds of scenes in war and to express their own expectations. As a result, the concept “APPEAL STUBBORNLY” is mapped onto the concept “SORGHUM’S DESIRE” and the conceptual metaphor comes out. Sorghum, like human beings, is trying to find ways to fight against the invading enemies and is eager for final victory in the Anti-Japanese War.

[SORGHUM IS AN INANIMATE THING]

“SORGHUM”, as a species of plant, not only can be mapped onto human beings, but also on other inanimate things. They are concrete and frequently used in people’s daily communication such as with reference to the ideas of ‘container’, ‘natural phenomenon’, ‘object’, and

‘situation’. Some particular examples are explained as follows.

1. Container

EX (15) 父亲提着手枪，钻进高粱地，跨过公路，走到哑巴面前。(Mo Yan, 2012 : 29)

Commander Yu signalled to Mute, who nodded and led half the men into the sorghum field west of the highway to lie in ambush. (Goldblatt, 1993: 26)

EX (16) 他目送着我奶奶钻出高粱地。(Mo Yan, 2012 : 105)

He watched her thread her way out of the sorghum field. (Goldblatt, 1993: 104)

From the examples above, we find that the “高粱地” (sorghum field) can be viewed as defining a container with an inside and outside. That is, the source domain ‘container’ is mapped to “高粱地” (sorghum field), with interiors mapped to interiors and exteriors. As a result, the container metaphor used here highlights the features of “高粱地” (sorghum field) that one can be into and out of it which is very similar to spatial features of a container. In locals’ minds, a sorghum field is a safe area and if they could make it to the sorghum field, Japanese troops wouldn’t be able to catch them. On the contrary, being out of a sorghum field is an area brimming with threat and danger.

2. Object

EX (17) 奶奶从撕肝裂胆的兴奋中挣扎出来，模模糊糊地看到了自己的眼前出现了一条崭新的、同时是陌生

的、铺满了红高粱钻石般籽粒的宽广大道，道路两侧的沟渠里，蓄留着澄澈如气的高粱酒浆。(Mo Yan, 2012 : 105)

Struggling to wrench free of this unknown passion, she had a dim vision of a new and unfamiliar broad road stretching out ahead of her, covered with sorghum seeds as red as rubies, the ditches on either side filled with crystal-clear sorghum wine. (Goldblatt, 1993 : 104)

The metaphor in this example is based on the similarities between "钻石" (rubies) and "红高粱籽粒" (sorghum seeds). To be specific, the source domain "钻石" (rubies) and the target domain "红高粱籽粒" (sorghum seeds) are similar in both shape and color. We can see that the external appearance of "钻石" (rubies) can be used as the source domain to map onto those of "红高粱籽粒" (sorghum seeds). Hence, the similarity between them lies in that both of them have the color red and are rice-sized shapes.

Motivations of "Sorghum" Metaphors

According to the analysis of the working mechanisms of "Sorghum" Metaphors in the previous part, the formations of "Sorghum" Metaphors are reasonably motivated. In this study, there are three aspects of motivations which generate the "Sorghum" Metaphors phenomenon.

Firstly, the motivation of production of "Sorghum" Metaphors originates from human beings' own cognition which is established on the basis of people's experiences and understanding towards the natural world. Sorghum, as a kind of

plant, ubiquitously exists in northeastern Gaomi while it may not be frequently seen in other living environments. Mo Yan, as a local person, who resides in that township, has a close relationship with sorghum. In other words, sorghum's natural characteristics have been deeply rooted in the cognition of Mo Yan. The two concepts, source domain and target domain, relate to each other with the help of the imagination of the writer. In example (17), he uses rubies as the source domain to refer to the appearance of sorghum seeds. The reason is that there is a concept called "RUBY" in his cognition, and this concept helps to create the conceptual metaphor of "SORGHUM'S SEEDS ARE RUBIES" which is eventually formed.

Secondly, apart from the biological environment, social factors also contribute to the formation of "Sorghum" Metaphors in this novel. It refers to a specific situation, time, place, and participants that were involved in the formation of "Sorghum" Metaphors. Such kinds of ideas are closely related to human's own experiences from their social context instead of being entirely attributed to people's imagination. Namely, if they ignore such kinds of context situations, people cannot use conceptual metaphors in a systematic way to express their ideas. If this were the case, mappings from source domains to the target domains would be farfetched and difficult to understand without the social context. Living in the countryside for 21 years, Mo Yan's personality and ideology have been greatly influenced by the customs and life there and his composition can also reflect the social environment and

mental representation in 1980s. In 《红高粱家族》 (Hóng Gāoliáng Jiāzú), the sorghum is not a simple plant but a dynamic creature which has a human spirit. Every strain of sorghum can demonstrate their own behaviors and emotions under the influences of the social environment. “Sorghum” Metaphors may lose their effects in expressing a concept without the social context which is based on a love story of “my grandparents” and the adventures of “my grandfather” (Commander Yu Zhan’ao) during the Anti-Japanese War. Take example (5) again, the writer uses the actions of human beings such as “痛苦挣扎” (struggling bitterly) to express the experience of the subverted sorghum stalks. Mapping from source domain “HUMAN BEING’S BEHAVIOR” to the target domain “SORGHUM” is based on the similarity of the encountered circumstances between the two creatures. Another typical example is example (11), the writer uses “纯种的红高粱” (pure-red sorghum) to stand for “我们家族的光荣的图腾” (our family’s glorious totem) and “高密东北乡传统精神的象征” (a symbol of the heroic spirit of Northeastern Gaomi Township). Mapping from the source domain “HUMAN BEING’S SPIRIT AND IDEOLOGY” to the target domain “SORGHUM” is based on the similarity of attributes between the two creatures. On the other hand, in example (10), the hybrid sorghum lacks the soul and bearing of pure-red sorghum. The social context of these metaphors is clearly shown in the previous description. As an abnormal sorghum, hybrid sorghum does not possess the characteristics of pure-red sorghum.

High yield, with a bitter, astringent taste, it is the source of rampant constipation. By using these sorghum metaphors, “hybrid sorghum” can be considered as “the deterioration of human nature” to arouse Chinese people to fight against the fascist aggressors and to defend our homeland and our cherished values. Besides, treating “red sorghum” as “the symbol of the Chinese national spirit”. Apparently, Mo Yan also expresses this sense of ardent love towards his motherland. It is also the aspiration of one who sincerely desires for world peace and human dignity.

Thirdly, the motivation of the production of “Sorghum” Metaphors originates from the Chinese traditional local culture. People who live in modern society have few opportunities to see real red sorghum, especially the people who do not reside in northeastern Gaomi. People’s conceptions of red sorghum are mainly from media and from Mo Yan’s literary compositions. Local peasants devote their whole life to the red sorghum field. As the writer mentioned in the novel, they were born and grew up on the sorghum land as well as being returned to the sorghum fields after their death from generation to generation. Meanwhile, such sorghum fields provide almost all necessary and important things for the local people’s life, including food, clothing, and shelter. “Sorghum” is also endowed with divinity by local persons and regarded as a totem worshiped by them. As stated in example (11), “它是你的护身符，也是我们家族的光荣的图腾和我们高密东北乡传统精神的象征！” (Pure - red sorghum is your talisman, as well as our family’s glorious totem and a symbol of the heroic

spirit of Northeast Gaomi Township!). Consequently, linguistic expressions about red sorghum which represent human beings are mostly positive such as “有生命力的” (vitality), “宽容的” (forgiving), “慈母般的” (motherly) as well as “爱情激荡的” (passionate and loving), and so forth. Actually, “sorghum” stands for Chinese people in general, especially the Chinese peasants because almost ninety percent of Chinese people lived in the rural areas at that time of the writing and the “sorghum land” can be regarded as a microcosm of China. As we have talked about in the previous section, the background culture information of sorghum metaphors depends on the tradition of Gaomi’s local culture. People who lived in northeastern Gaomi township have their own traditions and social customs distinct from those of other areas. His own weather-beaten township gave Mo Yan’s childhood ample starvation and solitude, while also gave him inexhaustible spiritual wealth. Hence, sorghum metaphors in this novel are reasonable and thought-provoking and full of profound implications regarding Gaomi’s cultural background.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This paper is about the study of sorghum metaphors in the Chinese novel 《红高粱家族》(Hóng Gāoliáng Jiāzú) from the perspective of the cognitive linguistics, which is mainly based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) of Lakoff and Johnson (2003). The purpose of this study is not only to analyze the working mechanisms of these sorghum

metaphors, but also to point out three main factors that affect the formation of such metaphors. There are two categories of metaphors that can be found which are SORGHUM IS A HUMAN BEING and SORGHUM IS AN INANIMATE THING. In particular, the study also examines how different aspects of the source domain are mapping onto the target domain of SORGHUM. It, to some extent, emphasizes the claim that the metaphorical process works like a filter, with the associated ideas of the secondary subject (vehicle) hiding, highlighting, and organizing aspects of the primary subject (Way, 1991). Moreover, the formation of “Sorghum” metaphors are influenced by three main factors, namely, cognitive factors, social factors, and cultural factors. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, people perceive the world differently depending on their own understanding and experience of the world. The results of the study strongly support the argument about the embodiment of metaphorical understanding: conceptual metaphors are not arbitrary, but grounded in our concrete bodily experience, our perception of the physical world, and our interaction with the nature around us (Johnson, 1987: 65). For the other two factors, they also play important roles in the formations of sorghum metaphors. As Wang (2014: 3) points out, Mo Yan sets off his own life experiences to narrate the “Country China” in 《红高粱家族》(Hóng Gāoliáng Jiāzú) and the descriptions give clear and deep expression of the simple Chinese traditional local cultures. In fact, social, cultural, and cognitive factors cannot be separated and neither exists

effectively without the others. Social and cultural constructions of experience fundamentally shape embodied metaphor (Gibbs, 1999: 155). The readers should combine the appreciation of sorghum metaphors with unique Chinese local culture to perceive the profound meaning of this classical masterpiece.

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