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COGNITIVE POTENTIAL OF THE BODILY CODE OF LITERARY METAPHOR

Summary. The *purpose* of this article is to explore the cognitive function of the body code in the artistic metaphors and the functioning of this code in fiction texts. The analysis of bodily metaphor in literature reveals its role as a cognitive tool in constructing the content of the text. As a *result* of the analysis, it has been determined that the body code is an important means of influencing the text on the reader. Using examples from the classic works of writers from Western Europe, Latin America, Russia, China, and Japan, the study investigates how bodily metaphors are engaged in the creation and transmission of meanings through sensory experience, symbols of movement, and spatial perception. *Conclusions* are drawn that the body code plays an important role in the creation of literary metaphors, which serve as a cognitive tool for cultural symbolization through language. Through the embodied expression of sensations, movement, and space, authors in literary texts are able to transform abstract themes into tangible experiences for readers, significantly deepening their understanding. From the perspective of cognitive tools, the bodily code helps readers connect abstract concepts with concrete physical experiences in the images of the world. Cultural symbols convey rich cultural connotations, reflecting human cognition of the world and the expression of emotions in various cultural contexts. The merging of different media: film, television, and games — defines the *prospects* for further studying media metaphorology, particularly the body metaphor, which often penetrates the texts of contemporary fiction from media texts.

Key words: literary metaphor; bodily code; cognitive function; sensory experience; textual analysis; fiction.

Introduction

Literary metaphor has long been considered the main manifestation of language art, and the body as the basis of human perception of the world plays an important role in the construction of metaphor. In recent years, the cognitive functions of the body code in fiction text have been the focus of attention. This problem is at the intersection of cognitive linguistics and literary studies. The bodily code not only conveys emotions through sensory perceptions (touch, sight, hearing), but also displays abstract concepts through action and spatial metaphors. For example, in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the bodily movements of "rising" and "falling" are metaphors for moral nobility and degradation; in classical Chinese poetry, cinema凭栏 (píng lán, "leaning against the fence") is often used as a metaphor for solitude or contemplation [14, p. 56–57].

In this paper, the bodily code is examined through the prism of the theory of cognitive metaphor, and the mechanisms of its functioning in literary texts and ways of influencing the reader are investigated. The analysis of literary works in different cultural contexts allows us to reveal the universality and specificity of the body metaphor and offers a new way of its interpretation for literary studies.

1. The theoretical basis of the body code: the interaction between cognition and metaphor. Before discussing the role of the body code in literary metaphor, it is necessary to analyze its theoretical basis. There is an inseparable relationship between cognition and metaphor that forms the basis for the functioning of the corporeal code. Cognitive linguistics offers a unique perspective for understanding this complex relationship, and body metaphors, being a key part of it, occupy an important place in literary creation and interpretation.

1.1. Body Metaphors in Cognitive Linguistics. Cognitive linguistics is developing against the theoretical background of second-generation cognitive science and empirical philosophy. It opposes the mainstream linguistic viewpoint of transformational generative grammar by advocating that the creation, learning and use of language is closely related to human cognition and that cognitive abilities are fundamental to human knowledge [5, p. 12–15]. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, in their authoritative work *Metaphors We Live By*, make it clear that the essence of metaphor is to understand abstract concepts through bodily experience. For example, the metaphor "time is space" is often said to derive from the experience of moving the body in space, and the sustained expressions "the future is ahead" and "the past is behind" [14, p. 34] illustrate how the concept of time is perceived and expressed through spatial experience.

In literature, such metaphors are often realized through physical actions or sensory images. In Marcel Proust's *Memories of a Watery Year*, "the taste of Madeleine's cake" [9] triggers a flood of mem-

ories, and the taste sensation is cleverly transformed into a metaphor for time. When the protagonist tastes the Madeleine cake, the memories of the past come upon him like a tidal wave, and this association between taste and time is a vivid embodiment of bodily experience in literary metaphors.

Among cognitive metaphors, structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors are distinguished. In literature, these types of metaphors can be conveyed figuratively by means of the bodily code. In Richard III, William Shakespeare skillfully metaphorizes the corruption of the state through the deformed body, directly correlating the deformation of the body with political chaos, forming a typical structural metaphor [10, p. 45–46]. Richard III's deformed body resembles the turbulent and corrupt state at that time, so readers can intuitively feel the metaphorical implication.

1.2. Systemicity of the Body as a Textual Symbol. The body code forms a complete system of symbols in literary creation, covering many levels and playing a crucial role in expressing and conveying textual meaning. At the level of sensory symbols, many literary works convey rich emotions and meanings through the depiction of bodily sensations. In *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, the tears 泪眼 (lèi yǎn) of Daiyu (黛玉) become a symbol of emotional vulnerability. Daiyu often washes her face with her tears, and as Cao Xueqin (曹雪芹) intends, her tears seem to be an outward expression of her innermost feelings, a metaphor for the delicacy and fragility of her emotions under feudalism [12, p. 67].

Action symbols also have powerful ideological functions. In Ernest Miller Hemingway's story "The Old Man and the Sea", the repeated description of Santiago's action of "holding on to the fishing line" is a deep metaphor for the old man's spiritual quality of perseverance. In his persistent struggle with the sea and the big marlin, Santiago always holds the fishing tackle tightly [3, p. 34–35], and this action becomes a symbol of his indomitable spirit in the face of adversity.

Spatial symbols also have a unique significance in literature. In Franz Kafka's (František / Franz Kafka) novel *The Castle*, the spatial imagery of the "inaccessible castle" conveys a sense of physical powerlessness. The protagonist tries his best to get into the castle, but is unable to do so. The castle seems to be an unattainable goal [4, p. 89–90], symbolizing the physical and mental powerlessness of man in the face of overbearing social order and rules.

This symbolic system activates the meaning of the text through the reader's embodied cognition, allowing abstract themes to be visualized. In Dante's *Divine Comedy* (Dante Alighieri), the bodily movements of "rising" and "falling" [14, p. 56–57] not only represent a metaphor for orientation, but also transform abstract moral judgments into tangible bodily movements through the reader's perception of physical space. By reading, one can personally feel the emotional ups and downs and moral choices of the protagonist in the stages of "rise" and "fall". This gives one a deeper understanding of the author's intent and the moral concepts he or she conveys in the work.

2. Textual Embodiment of Body Codes: Representation of Feelings and Emotions. The embodiment of body code in text is multidimensional, and the representation of feelings and emotions is especially significant in it. Through the depiction of sensory sensations such as touch and sight, literary works can subtly convey emotions and create a rich textual world. This juxtaposition enhances the emotional tension of the text, allowing the reader to gain a deeper understanding of the subtext of the work.

2.1. Tactile Metaphor and the Communication of Emotion. Touch is often used in literary works to create a sense of intimacy or alienation and becomes a powerful tool for conveying emotion. For example, Haruki Murakami (村上春树) describes in "The Norwegian Wood" that "Naoko's hands are as cold as snow" [20], and this tactile description is a vivid metaphor for the psychological barrier between Naoko and the outside world. Naoko's inner loneliness and closedness are conveyed to the reader through this pair of cold hands, making the insurmountable emotional distance between her and other people deeply felt.

In Eileen Chang's *The Book of Golden Locks* (张爱玲), the expression "The tangram bracelet hurts" ("七巧的手镯硌得生疼") shows Qixiao's deep emotional repression. The heavy bracelet makes Qixiao feel physical discomfort, which is a symbol of the distorted emotional suppression and pain experienced in the feudal family [24, p. 76–77]. This tactile code evokes empathy through the reader's bodily memory, greatly enhancing the emotional tension of the text.

In Yang Zhourong's (杨舟平) novel *Snow Tracks in Spring*, the tactile experience "雪路难行" ("It is difficult to walk on snow-covered roads") is not only a description of physical difficulties, but also a metaphor for the cultural difficulties of intellectuals in the midst of social change. The author cleverly turns the tactile perception of "足迹深深印在雪地" ("Footprints deeply imprinted on the snow") [22, p. 45–46] into a metaphor of interference with reality. The reader feels every step of the protagonist making a difficult crossing on the snow-covered road, and then appreciates the confusion and struggle faced by the intellectuals of the historical period described. This metaphor embodies the deep cultural meaning of this tactile code.

2.2. Visual Metaphors and Power Relations. Visual codes are often closely linked to narratives of power in literature, revealing the discipline of power over individuals through the experience of "watching" the body. In the novel *1984*, George Orwell used the visual symbol of "the eyes of Big Brother" [7, p. 56–57] to refer to the omnipresent surveillance. In the totalitarian society depicted in the novel,

the “eyes of Big Brother” constantly watch people’s every move, individuals have no privacy and the authorities control individuals in all aspects through this visual surveillance.

In Lu Xun’s novel *Medicine* (鲁迅), the visual images of 人血馒头 (rén xuè mántou, “Steamed human blood buns”) [18, p. 34–35] are a profound metaphor for society’s painful gaze. In the novel, people’s blind pursuit of 人血馒头 reflects people’s ignorance and stupor in the society at that time, and this visual depiction reveals the mental state of people under the power structure of the society, and the influence of the distorted view of power on people’s consciousness.

Visual metaphors show obvious differences in texts belonging to different cultures. In Western literature, the visual symbol “cross” often carries the meaning of redemption, such as in Fedor Dostoevsky’s novel *Crime and Punishment*, where the protagonist, Rodion Raskolnikov, seeks spiritual redemption through the depiction of episodes related to the crucifixion [1]. In classical Chinese poetry, visual images of 凭栏 [píng lán] are most often directed toward solitude or contemplation, such as in Liu Yong’s “Eight Sounds of Ganzhou” (柳永), where the poet writes: “不忍登高临远，望故乡渺邈，归思难收。叹年来踪迹，何事苦淹留？想佳人、妆楼颙望，误几回、天际识归舟。争知我，倚栏杆处，正恁凝愁！” [16, p. 67–68]. Here 倚栏 (yǐ lán), synonymous with 凭栏 (píng lán, “leaning against the fence”) conveys the emotional state of the protagonist: loneliness and longing for her hometown. This difference is due to the unique ways of encoding visual symbols in different cultural representations.

3. Action Codes and Spatial Metaphors: Dynamic Meaning Generation. Movement codes and spatial metaphors are intertwined with each other in literary works, and together they contribute to the dynamic meaning generation in texts. Body movements not only play a role in plot development but also reflect the psychological state of characters, and spatial metaphors reflect cognitive differences in different cultures through the position and experience of the body in space, giving the text a rich cultural connotation.

3.1. The narrative function of action metaphors. Body movement plays an important role in literary narrative, which can promote the development of plot and deeply draw the psychological state of characters. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Gabriel José de la Concordia García Márquez describes a long repetitive action, “Colonel Aureliano makes a small goldfish” [6], which is a metaphor for the state of loneliness. Colonel Aureliano makes little goldfish day after day and then melts them down and makes them again. This repetitive action is similar to his lonely life, which is a continuous cycle without end. It emphasizes the hero’s unbreakable loneliness in his heart.

Fugui in Yu Hua’s (余华) novel “To Live” “弯腰插秧” (“bends over to plant seedlings”) [23, p. 78–79]. This has become a metaphor symbolizing life’s resilience. Having gone through countless trials in life, Fugui remains faithful to the land, and planting the rice sprouts obliquely becomes a symbol of his persistent survival. He, like the crops on the land, always perseveres despite the wind and rain, reflecting the strength of life, the pull of life despite suffering.

In Xiao Feng’s (肖瑞峰Xiao Ruifeng) novel “Between the Lake and the Mountain”, the core of the plot is the suicide of the protagonist Jin Gangqiang [16, p. 45–46], which is not only a simple plot move but also a metaphor for spiritual collapse. Through this symbol of extreme action, the author reveals the deep existential dilemma that people face in the contradictions of urban and rural culture. In the urban-rural cultural conflict, Jin Gangqiang is caught in a spiritual dilemma due to his lack of sufficient cultural capital: he decides to commit suicide. This plot makes the reader think deeply about social reality and the fate of individuals.

3.2. Cultural Differences in Spatial Metaphors. The position and experience of the body in space reflect cognitive differences in different cultural contexts, and spatial metaphors have distinctive cultural features of encoding in literary works. In Western literature, ‘wilderness’ is often used as a metaphor for freedom, such as in Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, where the desire for a free and unbridled life is expressed through the depiction of wilderness [11, p. 34–35]. The expanse of wilderness symbolizes boundless freedom, allowing people to get rid of restrictions and get complete freedom.

In ancient Chinese poems, the act of “climbing to the heights” is mainly associated with nostalgic feelings. Thus, the eighth-century poet Du Fu (杜甫) in the poem “登高” [dēnggāo] (“Climbing to the top”) writes: “风急天高猿啸哀，渚清沙白鸟飞回。无边落木萧萧下，不尽长江滚滚来。万里悲秋常作客，百年多病独登台。艰难苦恨繁霜鬓，潦倒新停浊酒杯”。The poet climbed high and looked into the distance, the desolate autumn landscape before his eyes evoked a deep longing for his hometown, and the spatial act 登高 [dēnggāo] became a support for his nostalgic feelings [15, p. 67–68].

Cross-cultural comparison of spatial metaphors can further deepen the understanding of literary works. For example, in Japanese literature, harakiri is a metaphor for honor, and Yukio Mishima’s depiction of this action (平岡 公威) in “Kinkakuji” demonstrates the unique understanding and pursuit of honor in this cultural context [19]. In Western literature, in contrast, the spatial symbol “cross” carries the meaning of redemption, such as in Fedor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, discussed above. This distinction requires the reader to have appropriate knowledge of the cultural context when interpreting literary works in order to accurately decipher the deep meaning of the body metaphors.

4. Cross-Cultural Comparison of Body Codes: Universality and Uniqueness. Body codes across cultures possess both universality based on the common human physiological basis and uniqueness due

to their unique cultural contexts. Through an in-depth discussion of universality and uniqueness, we can better understand the rich subtext of the body code in literary metaphors as well as the profound influence of cultural factors on it.

4.1. Universality: common bodily experiences. Despite significant differences in language, customs, and other aspects, different cultures exhibit a striking universality in some aspects of bodily codes. This universality stems from the common physiological basis of human beings, making some body metaphors have similar meanings across cultures. For example, “heartbeat” is a common metaphor for tension in many cultures. In the novel *The Tell-Tale Heart*, Edgar Allan Poe demonstrates his protagonist’s fear and anxiety by showing how fast his heart beats when he is nervous [8, p. 56–57], and this heartbeat metaphor resonates across cultures.

Similarly, “smile” symbolizes benevolence in most cultures. In *Birds of a Feather*, Rabindranath Tagore (রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর) conveys warmth and friendliness through the depiction of smiles in many situations [21, p. 34–35], and this universal perception of smiles allows readers of different cultures to experience the kind feelings embedded in the work. Regarding touch, across cultures, ‘warmth’ and ‘cold’ are often associated with emotional intimacy. When people feel warm, they often tend to associate it with intimate and comforting emotional experiences, whereas when they feel cold, they may experience feelings of alienation and loneliness, reflecting the universality of the bodily code, in terms of tactile perception and emotional associations [13, p. 78–79].

4.2. Uniqueness: differences in coding in culture. Cultural contexts are like a unique coding system endowing bodily codes with unique meanings. We wrote above, in § 2.2, that classical Chinese poetry uses the cinema “凭栏” (“leaning against the fence; leaning on the fence”) as a metaphor for loneliness. However, in Western European literature, “leaning on the fence” means “observing the outside world”, such as in the novel *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert, Emma looks at the fence, which shows her curiosity and desire to see the beautiful world outside. This difference is due to the different emotional perception of space in different cultures. In Chinese culture, “leaning against the fence” is often associated with the expression of inner emotions. Leaning against the fence, a person contemplates the past, going over it in memory, or feels the present. And no one disturbs him, he is alone. In Western European culture, on the contrary, more emphasis is placed on man’s observation of the outside world, and the fence is the boundary that is closest to the object of observation and information about it. This difference in cultural code requires cross-cultural knowledge on the part of the reader.

Conclusion

Thus, as a result of this study, it has been established that the bodily code plays an important role in the creation of literary metaphors, fulfilling a dual function: a cognitive tool and cultural symbols. Through the embodied expression of sensation, movement and space, literary texts can transform abstract themes into tangible experiences for readers, significantly deepening their understanding of the works. In terms of cognitive tools, the bodily code helps readers connect abstract concepts to concrete physical experiences to better understand the meaning of the work; in terms of cultural symbols, it carries rich cultural connotations, reflecting human cognition of the world and expression of emotions in different cultural contexts.

With the development of time, future research can further explore the evolution of bodily codes in the digital reading era. In digital reading contexts, reading methods and experiences are changing significantly, and the form of interaction between body and text is also changing, which has implications for the understanding and use of bodily codes. In addition, new body metaphors are also an important area of cross-media narratives and deserve scholarly study. The confluence of different media: film, television, and games, demonstrates the importance of studying media metaphors, including body metaphor, often infiltrating recent literature. An in-depth study of the aspects we have touched upon will give us a fuller understanding of the role and significance of the bodily code in literature and media.

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КОГНІТИВНИЙ ПОТЕНЦІАЛ ТІЛЕСНОГО КОДУ ЛІТЕРАТУРНОЇ МЕТАФОРИ

Анотація. *Метою* цієї статті є дослідження когнітивної функції тілесного коду в художній метафорі літературних текстів і функціонування цього коду в тексті. У процесі аналізу тілесної метафори в художній літературі розкривається її роль як когнітивного інструмента у конструюванні змісту тексту. У *результаті* аналізу вдалося з'ясувати, що тілесний код є важливим засобом впливу тексту на читача. На прикладі класичних творів письменників із країн Західної Європи, Латинської Америки, Росії, Китаю та Японії у роботі досліджено, як тілесні метафори залучені до створення та передачі значень через сенсорний досвід, символи руху та просторове сприйняття. Зроблено *висновки* про те, що тілесний код відіграє важливу роль у створенні літературних метафор, які виступають когнітивним інструментом культурної символізації через мову. Завдяки втіленому вираженню відчуттів, руху та простору автори в літературних текстах здатні перетворювати абстрактні теми на відчутні досвіди для читачів, значно поглиблюючи їхнє розуміння авторського задуму. З точки зору когнітивних інструментів, тілесний код допомагає читачам зв'язати абстрактні концепції з конкретними фізичними досвідами у картинах світу. Культурні символи передають багаті культурні конотації, відображаючи людське пізнання світу та вираження емоцій у різних культурних контекстах. Злиття різних медіа: кіно, телебачення та ігор — визначає перспективи подальшого вивчення медійної метафорики, зокрема метафори тіла, яка часто саме з медійних текстів проникає в тексти сучасної художньої літератури.

Ключові слова: літературна метафора; тілесний код; когнітивна функція; сенсорний досвід; текстуальний аналіз; художня література.

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