

Chapter 4

LIFE AS OPERA: A Cultural Metaphor in Chinese

Ning Yu

4.1 Introduction

As a multidisciplinary area of research, Cultural Linguistics explores the relationship between language and cultural conceptualization (Palmer 1996; Sharifian 2011, 2015, 2017). It studies the cultural grounding of language and the linguistic encoding of culture, focusing on cultural conceptualizations, as manifested in linguistic expressions and cultural artefacts, which constitute collective cognition at the cultural level, namely “cultural cognition” as associated with a cultural group and distributed heterogeneously across its members (Frank 2015; Sharifian 2008, 2011, 2015, 2017). In examining aspects of cultural cognition, three theoretical constructs, which fall under the rubric of cultural conceptualizations, have proved particularly useful; these are cultural schema, cultural category and cultural metaphor (Sharifian 2011, 2015, 2017). As an analytical framework with a multidisciplinary origin, Cultural Linguistics has drawn upon various disciplines in cognitive science, among them being cognitive linguistics. In this chapter, I apply some of the insights of conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) of cognitive linguistics (see, e.g., Fusaroli and Morgagni 2013; Gibbs 1994, 2014; Kövecses 2005, 2010, 2015; Lakoff 1993; Lakoff and Johnson 1980/2003, 1999; Lakoff and Turner 1989) to the study of a cultural metaphor. I will focus on the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS AN OPERA as is manifested in Chinese language and culture. This metaphor, as I will show with some examples, is especially salient in Chinese culture, richly instantiated both linguistically and multimodally. As such, it represents a salient case of metaphorical conceptualization of life, characterising cultural cognition of the Chinese as a cultural group.

N. Yu (✉)
Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, USA
e-mail: ningyu@psu.edu

4.2 Life as a Show: Play and Opera

As a reference point, I set out with the LIFE IS A PLAY metaphor, which Lakoff and Turner (1989) suggest is an extraordinarily productive basic metaphor for life in English. For example, the following everyday expressions from Lakoff and Turner (1989) each instantiate this conceptual metaphor in one way or another:

- (1) a. *This is just a rehearsal.*
- b. *She's my leading lady.*
- c. *He plays an important role in the process.*
- d. *He's waiting in the wings.*
- e. *Act one was when we met.*
- f. *I've been in the spotlight.*
- g. *That's not in the script.*
- h. *He blew his lines.*
- i. *She brought the house down.*
- j. *And now I face the final curtain.*

That is, these linguistic expressions reflect a link in our conceptual system that connects our schematic knowledge about a form of performing arts, the source domain of theatric performance, with a mental perspective on life in general, the target domain here. This makes perfect sense in English-speaking culture, or Western culture in general, where play has been a major form of performing arts, as represented and highlighted by the Shakespearean tradition, through its history of civilisation. For instance, the following famous lines, which are based on the LIFE IS A PLAY metaphor, are from the scripts of Shakespeare's own plays:

- (2) a. All the world's a stage,
 And all the men and women merely players.
 They have their exits and their entrances;
 And one man in his time plays many parts.
 (*As You Like It* 2.7)
- b. Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
 And then is heard no more.
 (*Macbeth* 5.5)

In English-speaking culture, as Lakoff and Turner (1989) suggest, the ways in which a play can be made to correspond to life are extensively developed and conventionalised. Thus, the schema for a play is very rich. A play performance involves many essential elements, including actors, make-up, costume, a stage, scenery, setting and lighting, audiences, scripts, parts, roles, cues, prompts, directors, casting, playwrights, applause, bowing, and so on. Plays have a formal structure, typically consisting of prologue, acts and scenes, intermission, epilogue, and so on. Plays also have a narrative structure, which typically comprises introduction, complication, climax, resolution, etc. Many of these components of the play schema have a function in the LIFE IS A PLAY metaphor as is manifested in the English language.

In studying metaphor in culture, Kövecses (2005) proposes another conceptual metaphor, LIFE IS A SHOW, which is located at one level higher than that of LIFE IS A PLAY and LIFE IS A MOVIE in the cluster of conceptual metaphors organised in a hierarchical structure. It is a higher mapping in the sense that its source concept SHOW, which can be seen as representing performing arts for the purpose of entertainment in general, is the superordinate category of PLAY and MOVIE, which can be seen as its subordinate-level categories, or basic-level concepts in a three-level hierarchical system (Lakoff 1987). Kövecses (2005) argues that LIFE IS A SHOW is a central or foundational metaphor that lies at the heart of American culture. While cultures are characterised by certain central metaphors, the study of such metaphors and their lower-level versions can help us gain insights into a particular culture.

Along this line, Yu and Jia (2016) argue that, while LIFE IS A PLAY and LIFE IS A MOVIE also exist as sister subversions in Chinese, the most salient instantiation of LIFE IS A SHOW as a superordinate-level metaphor in Chinese culture is its basic-level instance LIFE IS AN OPERA, where “OPERA” refers to Chinese opera, with Beijing opera as its prototype. This metaphor plays a central role in the Chinese conceptualization of events and phenomena in various domains of life, constituting a core component of the Chinese cultural model of life.

As the source domain of the SHOW metaphor, the PERFORMING ARTS frame is summarised in Table 4.1. As a generic or superordinate category, PERFORMING ARTS evokes in our conceptual system a complex frame consisting of three aspects: PEOPLE, PERFORMANCE, and VENUE. It is worth noting that, in the context of Chinese culture, the three elements highlighted by italics, i.e. PERFORMER, OPERA and STAGE, are the most salient conceptual elements in their respective aspects. They are therefore three “focal points” among all elements in the frame. It is perhaps true of all cultures where the performing arts exist that PERFORMER and STAGE (or its equivalent) are the two most salient elements in the PERFORMING ARTS frame. However, it must be stressed that the selection of OPERA as the prototype among various types of PERFORMING ARTS as a superordinate category is unique to Chinese culture because by “opera” we really mean all the traditional varieties of Chinese folk opera, or “Chinese opera” (戏剧 *xìjù* or 戏曲 *xìqǔ*) as a cover term, with Beijing opera as its prototype.

Yu and Jia (2016) argue that OPERA (i.e. Chinese opera) is *the* central element that dominates the PERFORMING ARTS frame as the source domain of the LIFE IS A SHOW metaphor in the Chinese context. Therefore, it has the privilege and priority in setting “Chinese opera” as the default performance type in a neutral context. Following on Tables 4.1, 4.2 summarises the opera-centred PERFORMING ARTS frame in Chinese culture, focusing on PERFORMANCE, i.e. PERFORMER in PEOPLE and STAGE in VENUE. As shown in Table 4.2, the role types in Chinese opera have their special names. Each type is also classified into subtypes according to the roles’ gender, age and character, as is characterised by their special facial makeups and costumes. The

stage, as in Table 4.2, consists of a few components: an elevated platform, curtains, backgrounds, props, etc., of which the first two are more salient.

Yu and Jia (2016) show with ample linguistic data, both qualitative and quantitative, collected from real-life discourses and the CCL corpus (Center for Chinese Linguistics, Peking University) that the LIFE IS AN OPERA metaphor is an extremely salient one in Chinese culture and that it is systematically and widely manifested in the Chinese language (see also Yu 2011). They suggest that the Chinese word 戏 *xì* ‘opera’ should be regarded as one of those cultural keywords, through which cultures can be studied and understood (Wierzbicka 1992, 1997). Such keywords offer invaluable insights into cultures because they embody and manifest core cultural values and serve as “clues to the different cultural universes associated with different languages” and as “significant evidence for cultural history” (Wierzbicka 1992: 63). In this chapter, I will further the argument with a shifted focus on the evidence from cultural texts and cultural artefacts. Specifically, my argument here, in light of Cultural Linguistics (Sharifian 2011, 2015, 2017), is that in the context of Chinese the LIFE IS AN OPERA metaphor is a cultural metaphor on the basis of its source concept OPERA being a cultural category with a rich cultural schema. To that end, I will focus in this chapter on song lyrics as cultural texts and articles of visual

Table 4.1 Major components of the PERFORMING ARTS frame (Yu and Jia 2016)

Performing arts					
People		Performance		Venue	
Producer	Receiver	Types	Acts	Performing	Viewing
<i>Performer</i>	Audience	<i>Opera</i>	Body	<i>Stage</i>	Audience’s seats
Director		Play	Voice	Backstage	
Playwright		Dance	Instrument	Lighting Control	
...		Music	

Table 4.2 Chinese opera-centred PERFORMING ARTS frame focused on PERFORMANCE (Yu and Jia 2016)

Chinese Opera-Centred PERFORMING ARTS frame			
Performer		Opera	Stage
<i>Role prominence</i>	<i>Role type</i>	<i>Opera variety</i>	<i>Stage component</i>
Leading role	Male role (生 <i>shēng</i>)	Beijing opera (<i>jīngjù</i>)	Platform
Supporting role	Female role (旦 <i>dàn</i>)	Henan opera (<i>yùjù</i>)	Curtain
	Painted-face role (净 <i>jìng</i>)	Shaoxing opera (<i>yuèjù</i>)	Background
	Middle-aged man role (末 <i>mò</i>)	Cantonese opera (<i>yuèjù</i>)	Prop
	Clown role (丑 <i>chǒu</i>)	Kun opera (<i>kūnqǔ</i>)	Lighting
		Sichuan opera (<i>chuānjù</i>)	...
		...	

arts (photographs, paintings and calligraphies) as cultural artefacts. My goal here is to show that LIFE IS AN OPERA as a cultural metaphor is a central theme in Chinese culture that crystallises and highlights the Chinese cultural values and philosophical views of life and, as such, is represented and manifested richly and extensively in varied forms of cultural artefacts. It is hoped that the study will lead to more insights into the role of culture in shaping metaphorical conceptualization in particular, and into the relationship between language, culture and cognition in general.

4.3 Evidence from Cultural Texts and Artefacts

In this section I intend to illustrate the salience of the LIFE IS AN OPERA metaphor by citing examples of cultural texts and artefacts. By “cultural texts and artefacts” here, I specifically refer to texts of Chinese song lyrics and articles of Chinese visual arts such as photographs, paintings and calligraphies. In Chinese, the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS AN OPERA is prototypically instantiated by a four-character idiomatic expression: 人生如戏 *rénshēng rú xì* ‘life is (like) an opera’. In fact, this idiom is a motto-like expression of Chinese views of life, filled with cultural values that are, it is interesting to note, not necessarily consistent with, and sometimes contradictory to, each other when applied in different Chinese cultural contexts. As an expression of the Chinese philosophical stances on or attitudes toward life, it is therefore a popular theme in Chinese literary, musical and visual arts. Thus, Google searches by 人生如戏 ‘life is an opera’ led to various songs by that name or some similar names. The same keyword searches in Google Images (<https://images.google.com/>) also led to a large collection of images of visual arts with 人生如戏 ‘life is an opera’ as their central theme. This collection of images also includes some images of printed songs with both music and lyrics. Appendix contains five such images of songs.

4.3.1 Song Lyrics

In this subsection, I cite and discuss the lyrics of seven songs, of which five have their images provided in Appendix. The Chinese texts are accompanied by their more literal English translations to their right. Of the seven songs to be discussed, three have the title 人生如戏 ‘Life Is an Opera’, three are titled 人生大舞台 ‘The Big Stage of Life’, and one is entitled 人生舞台 ‘The Stage of Life’. My purpose here is limited to showing the salience of the LIFE IS AN OPERA metaphor in real-life Chinese discourses, so my discussion of each song is minimal. For a more systematic analysis of linguistic expressions that manifest this conceptual metaphor in Chinese see Yu and Jia (2016).

(1) Song (a): *Life Is An Opera*(Accessed 3/2/2016 at <http://www.zhaogepu.com/jianpu/131199.html>)

人生如戏	Life Is An Opera
人生就是戏, 演不完的戏, 有的时候悲, 有的时候喜, 看戏的人儿最呀最稀奇, 最呀最稀奇。 陪着流眼泪, 陪着笑嘻嘻, 随着剧中人, 忽悲又忽喜, 完全完全忘了他自己, 他呀他自己。 要是你比一比, 谁演的最卖力, 只怕那演员反而不如你, 看戏的人儿个个是戏迷。 人生就是戏, 演不完的戏, 有的时候爱, 有的时候气, 看戏的人儿个个是戏迷, 个个是戏迷。	Life is just an opera, an opera in which people will forever perform; sometimes it's tragic, and sometimes it's comic; those who watch the opera are most strange. They would burst into tears or giggles, with the roles inside the opera, becoming sad or happy instantly, having completely forgotten themselves. If you make a comparison, to find out who are performing with one's uttermost effort, (I'm) afraid the actors would be outperformed by you, unexpectedly; those who watch the opera are all theatre buffs. Life is just an opera, an opera in which people will forever perform; sometimes they love, and sometimes they anger; those who watch the opera are all theatre buffs.

Here, we have a narrator who is a detached, independent observer of the “opera of life”. According to this narrator, “life is just an opera”, an opera that will never end and that is full of unpredictable turns and twists. However, people living in this life are not all actors playing on the stage; instead, some of them should play the “role” of audience. The narrator is addressing one of the audiences as “you”. If the audiences are essential and indispensable for the life-opera to carry on, they should not be so engaged, neither physically nor emotionally, i.e. be so “into it”. Instead, they should remain “cool” and be detached as much as is the narrator. The general message is: Don't take it too seriously with life because, after all, “life is just an opera”.

(2) Song (b): *Life Is An Opera*(Accessed 3/2/2016 at <http://www.zhaogepu.com/jianpu/280783.html>)

人生如戏	Life Is An Opera
走过了人生的弯弯曲曲, 岁月啊不曾洗褪珍藏的记忆。 人生就像一场戏, 我方唱罢你登场永远不停息。 人生如戏, 人生如戏, 我们还在忙忙碌碌追逐名利。 人生如戏, 人生如戏, 我们还在苦苦寻觅不能放弃。 走过了人生的高高低低, 经过了许许多多酸甜和悲喜。	After we've walked over the zigzags of life, years and months haven't washed away the memories we've collected. Life is just like an opera, where I've just finished singing and you would immediately step onto the stage, which will never end. Life is an opera, and life is an opera; we're still very busy chasing fame and profit. Life is an opera, and life is an opera; we're still seeking toilsomely and would not quit.

(continued)

(continued)

人生如戏	Life Is An Opera
人生就像一场戏, 落幕后我和你都要离去。 人生如戏, 人生如戏, 平平淡淡从从容容是人生的真谛。 人生如戏, 人生如戏, 最终一切都像云烟随风而去。最终一切都像云烟随风而去。	Having walked over the ups and downs of life, we've experienced lots of sweet and sour, and lots of happiness and sadness. Life is just like an opera; after the curtain falls, you and I will both have to leave. Life is an opera, and life is an opera; plainness and calmness are the true meaning of life. Life is an opera, and life is an opera; eventually everything would be gone with the wind like clouds and smokes, like clouds and smokes.

Like song (a), this song again comments on the meaninglessness of chasing fame and profit in life, which after all is only an “opera” and therefore is not real. Although the life-opera would never end, everyone’s turn for performance on the stage is limited, and the curtain would fall on everyone, who would then have to step down from the life-stage. To have a plain and calm life is the true meaning of life since everything would eventually be gone with the wind like clouds and smokes. The general message is again: Don’t take it too seriously with life because, after all, “life is just an opera”. Apparently, the narrator is able to “see” the true meaning of life by watching the life-opera on a philosophical height (i.e. KNOWING/ UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING). This is because the narrator is also a laborious “traveller” who has actually undergone the twisted process of life-journey (i.e. LIFE IS A JOURNEY).

(3) Song (c): *Life Is An Opera*

(Accessed 3/2/2016 at <http://ox8289.blog.163.com/blog/static/16818367320121018113822105>)

人生如戏	Life Is An Opera
你已经离我而去, 再不能与你相聚, 我的眼里, 是想你的泪滴, 我的心里, 是难言的悲凄。 为什么你要与我分离? 不知道我是错在哪里, 感动的誓言依然牢记, 结成的果实悄然变异。 莫非是人生如戏, 这一幕已经完毕, 戏中话语, 不应该属于你, 剧中情意, 是虚假的演技。 你的演技却把我感激, 我已经被你深深沉迷, 曲终人散呆呆的伫立, 角落里孤独伤心自己。	You've left me and gone, and I could never be with you again; in my eyes are the tears of missing you, and in my heart is the sadness beyond words. Why did you want to break up with me? Don't know where I did wrong; the touching oath is still fastened in my heart, but its fruits have gone bad quietly. It may be because life is an opera and this act is already over; the lines in the opera should not have been yours, and the affection in the opera was fake from acting skills.

(continued)

(continued)

人生如戏	Life Is An Opera
人生如戏, 真真假假的演义, 我无法分析; 人生如戏, 虚虚实实的传奇, 我不能洞悉。	Your acting skills nonetheless made me feel grateful, and I was already profoundly charmed by you; after the music ended and the audiences dispersed, I stood stupefied in a corner, feeling saddened for myself in loneliness. Life is an opera, with true and false romance, which I am unable to analyse; life is an opera, with fake and real legend, which I am unable to understand.

This is a love song in which the first-person narrator, having been abandoned by her lover, is expressing her feelings of sadness, loneliness and confusion, directed to her ex-lover as the second-person addressee “you”. Here, the overall message is negative and cynic: Life is an opera in which nothing is real and everything is playacting. On the webpage, the lyrics of the song are accompanied by the image in Fig. 4.1. The image features a young lady, with tattoos or paintings on her body that appears to be naked. On her head, however, the young lady wears typical makeups and decorations of a young “female role” (旦角 *dànjué*) in Beijing opera. She appears quite sad, her left hand seemingly wiping off tears on her face. On the top of the image is the title of the song “Life Is an Opera”, followed by two stanzas (the third and fourth ones; see above) of the lyrics of the song. The verbal message on the image appears to be written with a brush pen, displaying the characteristics of Chinese calligraphy. As such, the image appears to be a visual instantiation of a conceptual blend in which “real life” and “fake opera” (as well as the traditional and the current) are mixed together. A naked young lady with tattoos or paintings on her body is unlikely to be found as a character in Chinese opera; this narrator is a human person in “real life”. However, the person in “real life” is wearing the mask of a prototypical *dàn* role that can be found only in a “fake opera”. This is because, to this young lady, the first-person narrator, “life is an opera” in a “real” sense.

The next three songs are titled 人生大舞台, which I translated into English as “The Big State of Life”. The Chinese title, however, can be translated as “Life Is a Big Stage”, too (see the first line of Song d below). As such, it can be seen as a linguistic instantiation of the underlying conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A STAGE, which, as I suggested elsewhere (Yu 2011), is a variant of LIFE IS A SHOW OF LIFE IS AN OPERA, with the source domain containing a within-domain mapping, namely, a metonymy: STAGE FOR OPERA OF LOCATION FOR ACTIVITY. So interpreted, we can formulate a conceptual metaphor that explicitly includes this metonymy in the expression: LIFE IS A STAGE FOR AN OPERA.

Fig. 4.1 The image that accompanies the lyrics of Song (c) on the webpage



(4) Song (d): *The Big Stage of Life*

(Accessed 3/2/2016 at <http://www.zhaogeju.com/jianpu/216800.html>)

人生大舞台	The Big Stage of Life
都说人生是舞台，生旦净末丑主宰。 有人扮得好辛苦，投入进去出不来。 有人游刃又有余，为什么下场很悲哀。 匆匆人生数十载，本色出演最可爱。 用情入戏戏自真，掌声如雷传天外。 嬉戏人生巧用尺，风烛明灭冷戏台。 人生大舞台，都盼花满怀。 心正身正台风正，生旦净末丑，样样都精彩。	Everyone says life is a stage, dominated by (all five types of roles) <i>sheng</i> , <i>dan</i> , <i>jing</i> , <i>mo</i> , and <i>chou</i> (see Table 4.2). Some people act so hard, having gotten themselves into their roles but unable to get out. Some of them act so skillfully, but why their endings are so tragic. During the hurried span of several decades of life, it is most lovely for people to play the roles of themselves. Being passionate and getting into your role, your performance will naturally look real, and the applause should be like thunder soaring into the space. Once cleverness is exhausted in a playful opera of life, the stage would become cold like a candle guttering and going out in the wind. Life is a big stage, and everyone hopes one's bosom will be filled with flowers. If one's heart and body are straight, one's stage demeanour will be straight as well; one's performance should be brilliant no matter which type of role one plays among <i>sheng</i> , <i>dan</i> , <i>jing</i> , <i>mo</i> , or <i>chou</i> .

While life is a big stage, everyone plays one or another type of role on this stage. Perhaps everyone on this life-stage expects to play a leading role, a role that is ideally one's own choice, and hopes to put on an outstanding performance, a great showing. In reality, however, no matter which type of role one plays, it is important that one play one's own role, namely be one's true self. This is because, in the source domain of OPERA, every actor plays a role that is not oneself; in the target domain of LIFE, however, it is not so desirable for one to "act" and pretend to be

someone else. “Playacting” in real life *is* pretentious. What is even more important is that one should be morally straight on the stage of life. In that case, one’s stage demeanour will be straight as well. It follows that one’s performance should be brilliant regardless of the type of role one plays on this stage. This song promotes moral uprightness and encourages the best performance of one’s true self on the big stage of life.

(5) Song (e): *The Big Stage of Life*

(Accessed 3/2/2016 at <http://www.zhaogepu.com/jianpu/211811.html>)

人生大舞台	The Big Stage of Life
人生大舞台, 每天都开拍, 时光不剪裁, 岁月不彩排。 你热血澎湃, 我激情满怀, 风流撒世界, 无处不精彩。 日出日落, 花谢花开, 春华秋实, 多少兴衰, 美好时代, 时不我待, 潇洒美丽就是现在。 人生大舞台, 每天都实拍, 开心不竞猜, 微笑不做派。 你为我加油, 我为你喝彩, 人人献真情, 处处充满爱。 风舞九州, 龙腾四海, 花好月圆, 幸福天籁, 梦想不败, 青春常在, 放飞未来, 快乐豪迈。	Life is a big stage, where the camera is shooting every day; time will not do ribbon cutting, and years and months will not do rehearsals. Your hot blood’s surging, and my bosom’s filled with passion; unrestrained spirit and behaviour are scattered all over the world, in which splendidness spreads everywhere. The sun rises and sets; the flowers blossom and whither; the prosperity of spring and the harvest of autumn alternate with cycles of wax and wane; in this age of excellence, time will await nobody; be brilliant and beautiful here and now. Life is a big stage, where the camera is rolling every day; happiness doesn’t come from chances, and smiles don’t come from acting. You root for me, and I cheer for you; everyone displays real affection, and it’s filled with love everywhere. The phoenix flying over China and the dragon rising above the four seas; the flowers blooming and the moon waxing; the sounds of nature pleasantly appealing, the dreams always coming true, the youth constantly lasting; let the future fly, and be happy and be proud.

In this song the first-person narrator, being one of those performing on the life-stage, conveys a positive message of a didactic nature: It is show time here and now on the big stage of life, and let us all do our best of acting and enjoy our time. Although life is an opera on this big stage of life, there is nonetheless no rehearsal possible for the life-opera. Every moment of it is being live televised with cameras rolling on and on. Due to the cooperative nature of opera performance, the best show is produced when all the performers, in both leading and supporting roles, act well in collaboration and coordination. This is also true on any scale of social life. Ideally, the world would be a much better place for all if people could help one

another and treat each other with true love and affection, that is, “rooting and cheering” for others for the betterment of life in general.

(6) Song (f): *The Big Stage of Life*

(Accessed 2/2/2015 at <http://video.sina.com.cn/v/b/124547694-2492417584.html>)

人生大舞台	The Big Stage of Life
人生大舞台, 百花争艳, 戏剧人生天天演。 有导演, 有演员, 叱咤风云起烽烟。 走上大舞台, 演就认真演, 争取满堂彩, 不枉演一遍。 虽想扮演帝王将相, 却演的是走卒马弁, 芸芸众生万万千, 岂能人人都如愿。 人生大舞台, 百花争艳, 戏剧人生人人演。 有主角, 有配角, 轻歌曼曲舞翩跹。 走上大舞台, 只能演一遍, 后退已无路, 步步走向前。 虽想扮演凤凰展翅, 却演的是龙落浅滩, 天时地利多变幻, 问心无愧我心安。 人生大舞台, 百花争艳, 你演我演大家演。 虽非太阳普天照, 繁星点点也灿烂。	On the big stage of life, a hundred flowers vie for glamour; the opera of life is performed everyday. There are directors, and there are performers, all commanding wind and storm and lighting flames of excitement. Walking onto the big stage, one should perform seriously, trying to bring the house down, so that one has not performed in vain. Although one wants to play emperor, king, general, or prime minister, one actually plays, however, a soldier or a bodyguard; there are millions and billions of people, how can everyone fulfil one's wishes. On the big stage of life, a hundred flowers vie for glamour; the opera of life is performed by everyone. There are leading roles, and there are supporting roles, all presenting lovely songs and elegant music, and graceful dance. Walking onto the big stage of life, one can only perform once; there is no way back, and one can only go forward step by step. Although one wants to play phoenix flying high with spreading wings, one actually plays a dragon stuck in a shoal; while the circumstances change so quickly, I have a clear conscience and my mind is at peace. On the big stage of life, a hundred flowers vie for glamour; you perform, I perform, and everyone performs. Although it's not the sun shining all over, the array of stars flashing here and there is also brilliant.

As can be seen, song (f), to some extent, repeat the main themes of both song (d) and song (e). On the big stage of life, people perform everyday. Everyone wants to play important, leading roles, but very often they are actually playing a supporting role that is insignificant at all. While everyone wants to succeed on the big stage of life, some of them end up in failure. No matter what role one plays, one should take it seriously and perform with full effort, because everyone, with no exception, can perform on this life-stage only once. If everyone puts on the best performance possible, the opera on the big stage will be a brilliant show. The song

contains quite a few idiomatic expressions that are filled with cultural meanings and values.

(7) Song (g): *The Stage of Life*

(Accessed 3/2/2016 at <http://www.zhaogepu.com/jianpu/70081.html>)

人生舞台	The Stage of Life
人生的舞台, 大幕已拉开; 啊年轻的朋友, 在生活之中, 你展示什么姿态? 是演喜剧, 欢笑中藏着多少苦楚? 是演悲剧, 落泪中包含多少期待? 人生的舞台, 这一出戏里, 啊年轻的朋友, 你塑造的形象, 是否可敬可爱? 朋友, 你快快挺起胸怀, 你莫徘徊, 你要自信自爱, 登上人生这座舞台! 即使在戏中你扮演小小配角, 啊年轻的朋友, 你也要叫它焕发出迷人的色彩。	On the stage of life, the grand curtains have been drawn apart; ah, my young friends, what stance do you want to present in life? If you are playing in a comedy, how much suffering is hidden in your laughter? If you are playing in a tragedy, how much hope is contained in your falling tears? On the stage of life, in this opera, ah my young friends, is the image that you are shaping respectable and lovable? My friends, please throw out your chest, and don't hesitate; you should have self-confidence and self-respect, and mount this stage of life! Even if you play a tiny supporting role in the opera, ah my young friends, you should make it glow with charming brilliance.

The last song, song (g), is titled “The Stage of Life”. In this song, the narrator calls upon the “young friends” to mount the stage of life, on which the curtains are already apart and the opera has started. This life-opera could be a comedy or a tragedy, in which happy laughs wrap sufferings and miseries contain hopes. Although the young friends may be playing the “tiny supporting role” in the life-opera, it is up to them, the actors and actresses, to make the roles they are playing “glow with charming brilliance”. It is the posture and image that they shape and present on the stage of life that are essential and crucial.

4.3.2 Visual Arts

In this subsection, I present some images of visual arts as multimodal evidence for the salience of the LIFE IS AN OPERA metaphor in Chinese culture. It is worth noting at this point that the Chinese word 戏 *xì* ‘opera’, which originally refers to any variety of Chinese folk opera with Beijing opera as its prototype, has undergone meaning expansion, which has given rise to various metonymic and metaphoric extensions. In Chinese, thus, *xì* can refer broadly to any performance or acting in the performing arts, in plays or movies, for instance. However, Chinese opera is a prototypical type of performing arts in traditional Chinese culture, and because of prototype effect, it has the privilege to be the default mental images evoked when triggered by the use of *xì* in a neutral context (Yu and Jia 2016). Thus, for instance,



Fig. 4.2 Images of Chinese calligraphies with the theme of “Life is an opera”

xì in song (c) is neutral between Beijing opera and play (both consisting of a certain number of acts) in surface, but as evidenced by Fig. 4.1, *xì* indeed invokes the mental images of Beijing (or Chinese) opera, which are externalised and visualised by the illustration in that figure. Such visual and multimodal evidence is of special significance in the study of conceptual metaphors (see, e.g., Forceville and Urios-Aparisi 2009; Forceville and Renckens 2013). In the following, I present more cultural artefacts as multimodal evidence. The evidence comes from three categories: calligraphy, painting and photography.

Figure 4.2 is comprised of four images of calligraphic writings. The significance of such writings as visual arts in Chinese culture lies in the fact that oftentimes Chinese calligraphers express philosophical-sounding mottoes or maxims, which are filled with cultural meanings and values, with this artistic form. The four images in Fig. 4.2, which display some variations in style, serve as examples that highlight the motto expression of a Chinese cultural conceptualization of life. They frame a prototypical Chinese worldview of life in a metaphorical mould. As such, images (a) and (b) are calligraphic presentations of the four-character motto: 人生如戏 ‘Life is an opera’. In images (c) and (d) the motto expression is extended and elaborated a little as follows:

- (8) a. 人生如戏, 全靠演技。你是自己生命的作者, 何必写这么难演的剧本。
Life is an **opera**, in which one relies entirely on one’s **acting skills**. You are the **playwright** of your own life, so why should you write a **script** for yourself that is so hard for you to **act out**?
- b. 人生如戏, 真实但却虚幻; 戏如人生, 虚幻但却真实。
Life is an **opera**, and it is real but illusive; an **opera** is life, and it is illusive but real.

As in (8a), if “life is an opera”, then people leading that life as an opera are actors and actresses whose acting skills are of utter importance for their success or

survival in this show business. Further, it is suggested that, since everyone is the playwright of one's own life (i.e. one can actually decide which path of life one wants to take), so why should one write a script so hard for oneself to act out (i.e. why should one be so hard on oneself)? The message conveyed is that: Life is an opera, and everything in it is fake, coming from acting skills; one should take it easy in life and not make it so hard for oneself. This is a quite cynical view of life, but it is of some positive value to people who are "too hard" on themselves in life.

Example (8b) characterises the correspondence between life and opera—the latter being a dramatised epitome of the former—with a mirror-like expression of parallel structure and of paradoxical or oxymoronic nature. It is an extension and elaboration of 人生如戏, 戏如人生 'Life is an opera; an opera is life', which is an old saying in Chinese culture. A synonymous couplet in the profession of opera performing art is: 戏台小天地, 天地大戏台 'The opera stage is small heaven and earth; heaven and earth are a big opera stage'. Of this couplet the second half is a metonymic extension of 人生如戏 'Life is an opera'. In traditional Chinese culture, the "heaven and earth" metonymically stand for the "world", and for "life" that unfolds between them. In a similar vein, the "opera stage" as venue or location metonymically stands for "opera" itself as activity. Thus, "heaven and earth are a big opera stage" is a linguistic instantiation of a conceptual metaphor that involves a metonymic mapping in both the source and the target domain: HEAVEN AND EARTH FOR LIFE ARE A STAGE FOR OPERA.

Figure 4.3 comprises seven images of Chinese paintings on the theme of "Life is an opera". They feature various role types in Chinese opera. Typically characteristic of this type of Chinese fine arts, drawn with the Chinese brush pen, all the paintings have calligraphic writings on them as well. Since their theme is "Life is an opera", all of them have at least 人生如戏 'Life is an opera' as the caption. For instance, image (e) has the following line written by the artist: 人生如戏, 戏亦人生; 个中情节何必认真 'Life is an opera, and an opera is life, too; why one should take its plot so seriously'.

Finally, I turn to some examples of photography with the theme of "Life is an opera". First, look at the examples in Fig. 4.4.

As two photographs of the same set, each of them features two face images of the same actress in Chinese opera makeups. The two face images, one bigger and one smaller, are overlapped with each other, with neither one so clearly delineated or presented. Both photographs are accompanied with captions to the right, as rendered in (9).

- (9) a. 人生如戏: 人生就象一场戏, 戏里戏外我们都扮演着主角, 演绎着世间悲喜离合...
- Life is an **opera**: Life is just like an **opera**; we are **playing a leading role** within or beyond **opera**, **performing** sorrows and joys, partings and reunions, in life...
- b. 人生如戏: 从哇哇坠地, 每一个人就都是戏子, 不管你是否愿意接受命运安排的角色。
- Life is an **opera**: Ever since the time of birth, everyone is an **opera performer**, regardless of whether you are willing to accept the **role** arranged by the fate.

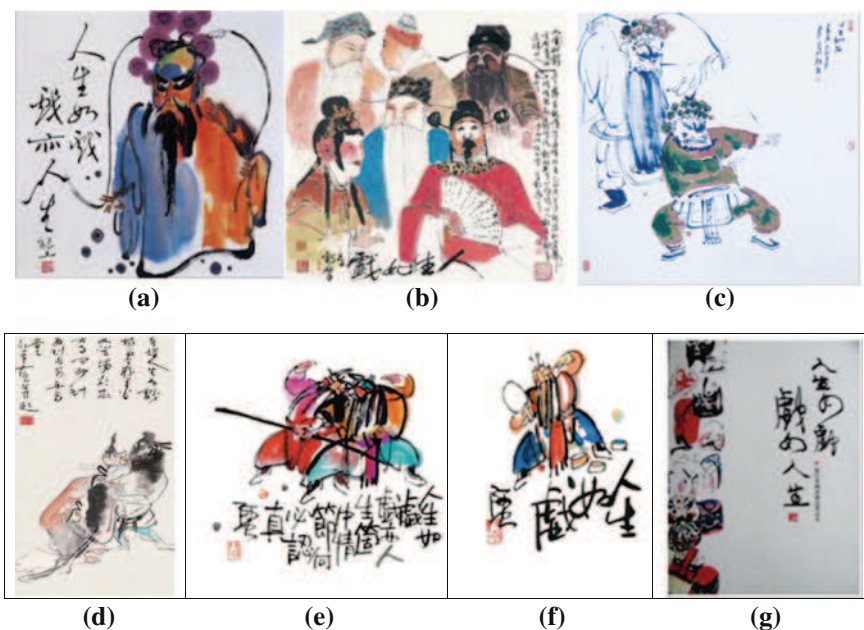


Fig. 4.3 Images of Chinese paintings with the theme of “Life is an opera”

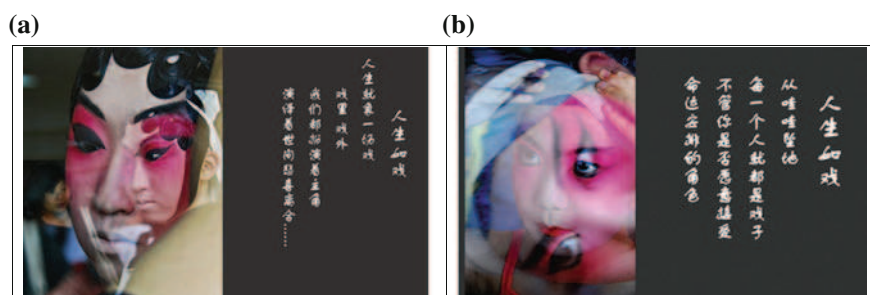


Fig. 4.4 Two images of photographs with captions on “Life is an opera”

In (9a), life is said to be “just like an opera”, which is a clear case of simile. We are all “playing a leading role” in our own life regardless of whether or not our life is conceived of as an opera. In any event, we simultaneously performing and experiencing our role of various kinds in the world no matter whether or not it is conceived of as a stage. As in (9b), since life is an opera, each of us becomes an opera performer ever since our births and starts playing our roles as arranged by the fate, willingly or unwillingly.

The last set of photographs, provided in Fig. 4.5, is from an online photography collection entitled 唯美中国风: 人生如戏 “The Chinese Wind of Aestheticism:

Life Is an Opera’ (Accessed 3/20/2016 at http://www.manshijian.com/articles/article_detail/159534.html). It is called “Chinese Wind” because it is perceived as being uniquely and characteristically Chinese and as being extremely popular like a “wave” in fashion. As shown in the collection, all the photographs highlight 旦角 *dànjué* ‘female role’ of Beijing opera as the prototype of Chinese opera. This is because this type of role embodies the traditional Chinese aesthetic view of beauty. This collection and some similar online photograph collections (as well as a large number of multimodal presentations available online) with the theme of “Life is an opera” mark “a draft of wind” to restore the old customs or traditions and to return to the ancients (复古风 *fùgǔ fēng*) in aesthetics as well as in popular culture.

4.3.3 Summary

In this section, I presented some cultural artefacts as multimodal evidence in support of the argument that the LIFE IS AN OPERA metaphor is a central one in Chinese



Fig. 4.5 Images of a collection of photographs with the theme on “Life is an opera”

culture in contrast to, for instance, the *LIFE IS A PLAY* metaphor in the West. More specifically, I presented first the lyrics of seven songs and then four images of Chinese calligraphies, seven images of Chinese paintings, and 14 images of photographs, all centering on the theme of “Life Is an Opera”. That is, *LIFE IS AN OPERA*, as a cultural metaphor based on a dominant cultural category (*OPERA*) and a rich cultural schema for Chinese opera, serves as a core component of the Chinese cultural conceptualization of life. In the next section, I will zoom into the role of culture in the shaping of this metaphorical conceptualization of life as opera.

4.4 The Role of Culture in Metaphorical Conceptualization of Life as Opera

As shown in the preceding sections, the *LIFE IS AN OPERA* metaphor is by nature a culture-specific metaphor because “opera” really refers to Chinese or Beijing opera. Yu and Jia (2016) presented linguistic evidence for the salience of this metaphor in Chinese culture, suggesting that the Chinese word 戏 *xì* be regarded as a cultural keyword (Wierzbicka 1992, 1997) and that this metaphor with the source concept encoded by *xì* be seen as a central metaphor characteristic of Chinese culture (Kövecses 2005). In Sect. 3, I presented further evidence with examples of cultural artefacts, both lyrical and visual (fine-artistic, calligraphic and photographic). My point is, again, that the *LIFE IS AN OPERA* metaphor is so salient in Chinese culture that it is a cultural metaphor located at the core of the Chinese cultural model of life, serving as a lens through which life is viewed and conceptualised in a way that is specifically Chinese. At the same time, however, the cultural metaphor is shaped by this cultural model. In this section, I would like to focus on the role of culture in shaping this conceptual metaphor.

According to CMT, metaphor involves three levels of phenomena. At the level of linguistic usage, which is the surface that is perceptible, is what is known as “linguistic metaphor”. Linguistic metaphor is said to consist in a particular linguistic pattern that manifests the underlying “conceptual metaphor” which, in turn, is grounded in a special experiential basis which can be defined broadly as the interaction between cultural experience and bodily experience (Maalej and Yu 2011; Sharifian et al. 2008; Yu 1998, 2008, 2009a, b). All three levels of phenomena, however, exist in the sphere of culture, as shown in Fig. 4.6.

Specifically, at the conceptual level, metaphor involves a mapping from the source domain to the target domain. In the case of *LIFE IS AN OPERA*, the target domain is *LIFE* and the source domain is the conceptual frame of *CHINESE OPERA* (see Table 4.2), which inherits the properties and elements in the *PERFORMING ARTS* frame in general (see Table 4.1). If a conceptual metaphor is shared by the members of a cultural group, it is then part of cultural conceptualization, which is the focus of Cultural Linguistics studies (Sharifian 2003, 2011, 2015, 2017; see also Musolf 2015, this volume).

As mentioned recurrently, Beijing opera is the prototype of Chinese opera as a cultural category. As such, it is the best and most widely known variety of Chinese opera, with an extremely rich cultural schema among the Chinese, and has the privilege and priority in representing Chinese opera as a whole. Note that, as the source domain of the LIFE IS AN OPERA metaphor, the conceptual frame of BEIJING OPERA as a cultural category is extremely rich and complex, organising and structuring our rich knowledge about Beijing opera, characterised saliently by its set yet varied patterns in PEOPLE, PERFORMANCE and VENUE. The aspect of PEOPLE includes the special role types and their characteristic makeups, masks, decorations and costumes, and the special ways of interaction between performers and audiences throughout the process. The aspect of PERFORMANCE includes the roles' special ways of singing, speaking and acting with particular patterns of bodily acts and moves, as well as musical and percussive accompaniment performed with specific instruments as prelude to the opera and links between its acts and throughout the opera per se. The aspect of VENUE includes the special use of lighting, and of setting such as particular decorations of the stage with background and props. Thus, this conceptual frame of BEIJING OPERA, exceptionally rich and complex, is part of our cultural knowledge that the Chinese people have gained through their frequent contacts with Beijing opera while being raised and immersed in Chinese culture. It is because this conceptual frame is complex with a large number of components well patterned in a

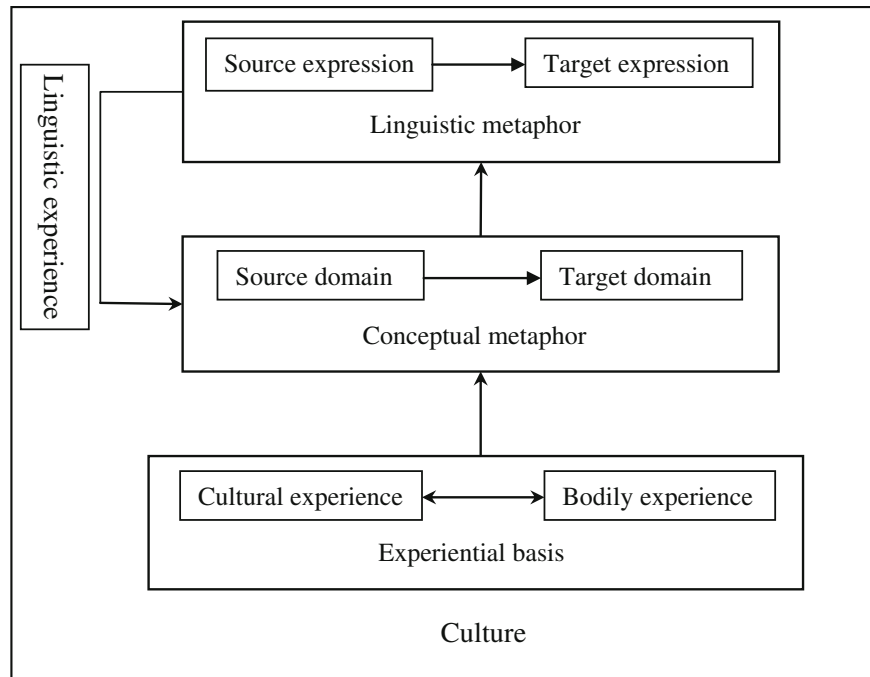


Fig. 4.6 Three levels of phenomena for metaphor in culture

systematic way that this conceptual metaphor as a cultural metaphor rooted in it is a typical case of “structural metaphor” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) that maps rich inference structures from the source domain onto the target domain.

As indicated in Fig. 4.6, conceptual metaphor is not arbitrary, but grounded in its experiential basis. This experiential basis, however, emerges from the interaction between bodily and cultural experience. There are various kinds of bodily experience but only some of them can emerge through the “cultural filter” and participate in metaphorical mappings (Yu 2008). Bodily experience refers to the fundamental lived experience and operating activity with and from the sensorimotor system of the human person as an embodied being functioning in the physical world. This physical world, however, can never be void of culture; instead, physical environment has always been affected and constructed by the changing culture in and over it. Thus, people who live in a particular physical environment simultaneously experience the culture coupled with it. This is what I refer to as “cultural experience”, which includes, in Chinese culture, watching Beijing opera in a theatre, in a film, on TV, on a computer, or on a iPad, or listening to it on a radio or on another kind of mobile device like a iPhone, or appreciating it on Chinese paintings, in Chinese calligraphies or photographs, or reading about it in literary or nonliterary texts, or singing songs concerning it or containing its characteristic elements, and so on and so forth. As a cultural icon, indeed, Beijing opera has penetrated Chinese people into their inner world long before they can actually realise it. Because Beijing opera is such a salient and iconic aspect of traditional Chinese culture, the Chinese experience with it is profound and the conceptual metaphor that is based on it is also salient in this culture, hence, a cultural metaphor. Because Beijing opera is a unique form of performing arts in traditional Chinese culture, hence, a cultural category with a rich cultural schema, the conceptual metaphor that deploys it as the source domain should be culture-specific, even though it also shares many elements and components, at a more abstract level of PEOPLE, PERFORMANCE and VENUE, with many other forms of performing arts found in various cultures.

According to CMT, linguistic metaphors manifest underlying conceptual metaphors. Language itself is a mirror and carrier of culture. How conceptual metaphors are manifested in a particular language has a great deal to do with the culture with which the language is coupled, as the result of the interaction between language and culture. Linguistic instantiations of the same conceptual metaphor can be similar or different in various languages. Such similarities and differences across languages are analysable in terms of a set of contextual factors—situational, discourse, conceptual-cognitive and bodily—at a more specific level (Kövecses 2015). At a generic level, contextual factors arise from the interaction between culture, body and language (Maalej and Yu 2011; Sharifian et al. 2008; Yu 2009a, b). As shown in Fig. 4.6, there is a line pointing from linguistic metaphor to conceptual metaphor. This line represents the possibility and potential of the former exerting an influence on the latter (see, e.g. Casasanto 2016; Gibbs 2014). That is, people using different metaphors in their respective languages conceptualise the target the way they talk about it (Casasanto 2016). Through their repeated use, linguistic

metaphors can possibly or potentially reinforce, modify, or even produce (especially through linguistic inheritance) conceptual metaphors. Yu and Jia (2016: 177) suggest that:

linguistic manifestations of conceptual metaphors in characteristic patterns in languages are not just a simple consequence of conceptual mappings in thought. Instead, characteristic linguistic patterns in a language influence its speakers' way of viewing the world and their experience in it. They constitute whole-sale packages that the speakers of the language inherit as part of their cultural and cognitive heritage. For that matter, they carry special weight on and for those who carry them.

As outlined in Fig. 4.6, there exist three kinds of experience that work and mingle together to shape the formation of conceptual metaphors in particular, and human cognition in general. First, there is bodily experience that contributes to it as the result of human embodiment (Gibbs 2006). This bodily experience, however, always interacts with cultural experience in a specific environment or situation. That is, embodiment is forever socioculturally situated (Frank et al. 2008). Finally, there is also linguistic experience inherited by its speakers as part of their cultural and cognitive heritage. All three kinds of experience, nevertheless, are situated in the sphere of culture. Culture is a superior force that permeates human conceptualization and cognition. That is why it is of utter importance to study cultural conceptualization and cultural cognition, on which Cultural Linguistics focuses.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I set out to examine a culture-specific conceptual metaphor *LIFE IS AN OPERA* by focusing on its salience in various cultural artefacts in the forms of lyrics, Chinese calligraphies, Chinese paintings and Chinese-style photographs. This cultural metaphor plays an important role in the Chinese cultural model of life, framing Chinese attitudes toward life and characterising a Chinese worldview on life. I then moved on to discuss the role of culture in shaping conceptual metaphors. It was noted that there are three kinds of experience at work: bodily experience, cultural experience and linguistic experience. While the first two constitute the experiential basis from which conceptual metaphors emerge as a result of human cognition being embodied in sociocultural situation, the third kind, linguistic experience, manifests conceptual metaphors in human communication according to the definition of culture. In doing so, linguistic experience either reinforces underlying conceptual metaphors, or modifies them with the change of culture and language. Since linguistic experience is whole-sale packages inherited by the speakers of the language as their cultural and cognitive heritage, it in this sense also produces conceptual metaphors in the minds of each new generation.

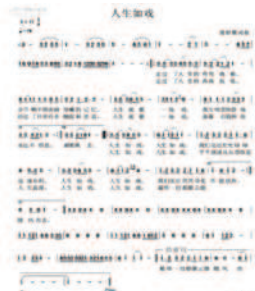
Appendix

Images of the songs under study collected through Google searches

(a)



(b)



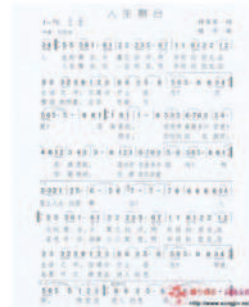
(c)



(d)



(e)



References

- Casanto, D. (2016). Linguistic relativity. In N. Riemer (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of semantics* (pp. 158–174). New York: Routledge.
- Forceville, C., & Renckens, T. (2013). The good is light and bad is dark metaphor in feature films. *Metaphor and the Social World*, 3(2), 160–179.
- Forceville, C., & Urios-Aparisi, E. (Eds.). (2009). *Multimodal metaphor*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Fusaroli, R., & Morgagni, S. (Eds.). (2013). Special issue on “Conceptual metaphor theory: Thirty years after”. *Journal of Cognitive Semiotics*, 5(1/2).
- Frank, R. M. (2015). A future agenda for research on language and culture. In F. Sharifian (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of language and culture* (pp. 493–512). London: Routledge.
- Frank, R. M., Dirven, R., Ziemke, T., & Bernárdez, E. (Eds.). (2008). *Body, language and mind, Vol 2: Sociocultural situatedness*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

- Gibbs, R. W. (1994). *The poetic mind: Figurative thought, language and understanding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gibbs, R. W. (2006). *Embodiment and cognitive science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gibbs, R. W. (2014). Conceptual metaphor in thought and social action. In M. J. Landau, M. D. Robinson, & B. P. Meier (Eds.), *The power of metaphor: Examining its influence on social life* (pp. 17–40). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Kövecses, Z. (2005). *Metaphor in culture: Universality and variation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A practical introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kövecses, Z. (2015). *Where metaphors come from: Reconsidering context in metaphor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lakoff, G. (1987). *Women, fire and dangerous things: What categories reveal about the mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G. (1993). The contemporary theory of metaphor. In A. Ortony (Ed.), *Metaphor and thought* (2nd ed., pp. 202–251). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980/2003). *Metaphors we live by* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the flesh. The embodied mind and its challenge to Western thought*. New York: Basic Books.
- Lakoff, G., & Turner, M. (1989). *More than cool reason: A field guide to poetic metaphor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Maalej, Z. A., & Yu, N. (Eds.). (2011). *Embodiment via body parts: Studies from various languages and cultures*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Musolff, A. (2015). Metaphor interpretation and cultural linguistics. *Language and Semiotic Studies*, 1(3), 35–51.
- Musolff, A. (this volume). Metaphor and cultural cognition. In F. Sharifian (Ed.), *Advances in cultural linguistics*. Berlin: Springer.
- Palmer, G. (1996). *Toward a theory of cultural linguistics*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Sharifian, F. (2003). On cultural conceptualizations. *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, 3(3), 187–207.
- Sharifian, F. (2008). Distributed, emergent cultural cognition, conceptualization and language. In R. M. Frank, R. Dirven, T. Ziemke & E. Bernárdez (Eds.), *Body, language and mind, Vol 2: Sociocultural situatedness* (pp. 109–136). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Sharifian, F. (2011). *Cultural conceptualizations and language: Theoretical framework and applications*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Sharifian, F. (2015). Cultural linguistics. In F. Sharifian (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of language and culture* (pp. 473–492). London: Routledge.
- Sharifian, F. (2017). *Cultural linguistics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Sharifian, F., Dirven, R., Yu, N., & Niemeier, S. (Eds.). (2008). *Culture, body and language: Conceptualizations of internal body organs across cultures and languages*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1992). *Semantics, culture and cognition: Human concepts in culture-specific configurations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1997). *Understanding cultures through their key words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yu, N. (1998). *The contemporary theory of metaphor: A perspective from Chinese*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Yu, N. (2008). Metaphor from body and culture. In R. W. Gibbs (Ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of metaphor and thought* (pp. 247–261). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yu, N. (2009a). *The Chinese HEART in a cognitive perspective: Culture, body and language*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Yu, N. (2009b). *Form body to meaning in culture: Papers on cognitive semantic studies of Chinese*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

- Yu, N. (2011). Beijing Olympics and Beijing opera: A multimodal metaphor in a CCTV Olympics commercial. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 22(3), 595–628.
- Yu, N., & Jia, D. (2016). Metaphor in culture: LIFE IS A SHOW in Chinese. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 27(2), 146–179.

Author Biography

Ning Yu is Professor of Applied Linguistics and Asian Studies at The Pennsylvania State University. His areas of research include the relationship between language, culture and cognition and cognitive approach to metaphor studies. He is the author of *The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor: A Perspective from Chinese* (John Benjamins 1998), *The Chinese HEART in a Cognitive Perspective: Culture, Body and Language* (Mouton de Gruyter 2009) and *From Body to Meaning in Culture: Papers on Cognitive Semantic Studies of Chinese* (John Benjamins 2009).