

Cultural Factors in Semantic Extension: A Typological Perspective on Chinese Polysemy

QIAO YUN

University of Granada

Abstract

This article offers a typological approach to Chinese polysemy. Cultural factors are verified to have profound effects on propelling semantic extension mechanism, through analyzing multiple instances in Chinese and English. Chinese polysemy reveals abundant inherent individual characteristics, however in respect of semantic extension, it relates to many universals as well that are comprehensible to a large extent.

Keywords: *Semantic Extension, Cultural Factors, Chinese Polysemy, Universality, Individuality*

0. Brief Overview of the Studies on Chinese Polysemy

Polysemy is a pivotal concept in linguistics giving the study of polysemy fundamental importance. Since Michel Bréal proposed the term “polysémie” in 1897, research on this topic has been done through the century. Nerlich & Clarke (2003) provided a wide overview of these studies, from the past till the present, including both synchronical and diachronical types, the traditional methods, as well as to the modern cognitive, psycholinguistic or computational approaches.

Chinese language is abundant in polysemous words and even as early as in the Shang Dynasty (ca. 1600 to 1046 BC), the Oracle Bone characters (甲骨文 *jiǎgǔwén*) recorded a lot of use.¹ There have been also a variety of studies on Chinese polysemy. The earliest can be traced back to the traditional

¹ See also Zhao Cheng (赵诚, 1988) and Chen Nianfu (陈年福, 2006, 2007).

exegetics (训诂 *xùngǔ*)². Till Qing Dynasty (1616-1911), the exegetics have been developed thoroughly and particularly attached importance on semantic extensions.

The previous studies provide profuse materials for the contemporary investigations that have prospered since the 1950s. Zhang Zhigong (张志公, under the pseudonym Xiang Chao 向超, 1952) and Xuan Chang (玄常, 1953, 1954) discussed diachronically the old and updated lexical meanings and semantic changes. Sun Liangming (孙良明, 1958) noticed the links and distinctions between polysemy and semantic evolvement. Zhou Zumo (周祖谟, 1959, pp. 23-24, *passim*) tried to distinguish polysemy from homonymy: whether relations exist among the different meanings; a polyseme has a “basic meaning (基本义 *jīběnyì*)” and “transferred meanings (转义 *zhuǎnyì*)” that includes “extended meanings (引申义 *yǐnshēnyì*)” and “比喻义 figurative meanings (*bǐyùyì*)” and more transferred meanings can be also derived from the both.

After the academic depression during the “Great Cultural Revolution (文化大革命 *Wénhuà dà gé mìng* 1966-1976)”, Gao Wenda & Wang Liting (高文达 王立廷, 1980, pp. 66) differentiated between lexical senses and morphemic meanings (sememes). Furthermore, they analyzed the semantic extension measures: the radiative, the link-chained and the combinative forms. Zhang Yongyan (张永言, 1982, pp. 49) reemphasized that polysemy is not diachronically semantic changes but a synchronic concept, that is, if a sense has faded out of present uses, it does not possess the qualification to be one of the polysemous senses of the word. Li Xingjian (李行健, 1983) noticed that synaesthesia is also a common approach to polysemous generation. Fu Huaiqing (符淮青, 1985, pp. 42, 51, *passim*) introduced the term “义项 (*yìxiàng*, sense item of a dictionary entry)”, which is different from “意思 (*yìsi*, meaning)” due to the generality, and thus the definition of

² 训诂 (*xùngǔ*, exegetics), critical interpretation of ancient texts, especially focus on the explanations of words in ancient books. The branch of study emerged from the pre-Qin days (先秦 *Xiānqín*, prior to 221 BC), and formed in Han Dynasty (206 BC - AD 220).

polysemy is more comprehensible and distinct from monosemy and homonymy. According to the morphological property of the sense items, polysemy has multiple lexical meanings or morphemic meanings (sememes), or the both. Ge Benyi (葛本仪, 1985, pp. 121, *passim*) became aware that the monosemantic feature of a polyseme that is determined by the specific context; besides extension and tropes, other approaches to developing new meanings include “借代 (*jièdài*, metonymy)” and “特指 (*tèzhǐ*, particularization)”.

Xu Zhicheng (徐志成, 1990) and Zhang Lianrong (张联荣, 1992) adopted semanteme analysis to discuss the phenomenon of polysemy. Chen Guangsu (陈光苏, 1992) argued against the previous opinion that “the sense items are increasing constantly” in the modern Chinese in which polysyllabic words are in the majority. Monosemy becomes more common than polysemy with the general tendency to a reduced quantity of sense items. Zhou Guangqing (周光庆, 1992) explored the motivation of cultural and psychological factors to semantic extension. Traditionally, linguists tend to regard polysemy as the result of “sense development” in terms of the “broadening” or “narrowing” of meaning or the “transference” from concrete to abstract or from commendatory to derogatory or vice versa.³ Zhang Zhiyi (张志毅, 2001) argued against the traditional reasoning and proposed five modes of semantic evolution: psychological mode; rhetorical mode; logical mode; historical mode; and exegetical mode. Dong Weiguang (董为光, 2004) concluded the types of Chinese semantic development: the linguistic evolution includes (1) association based on the similarity in form or appearance, (2) association formed on correlation, (3) conversion of part of speech, (4) abbreviation, (5) independence of semanteme, (6) participation of context, (7) adhesive mood; and the ultra-linguistic evolution includes (1) material progress, (2) the renewal of knowledge, (3) readjusted semantic field. Sun Jishan (孙继善, 2001) and Zhang Bo (张博, 2004) methodologically discussed the distinction between polysemy and homonymy and suggested applicable standards, for example, Zhang Bo propounded four approaches: (1)

³ Citation from Yip Po-Ching (2000, P275).

semanteme analysis, (2) etymological study, (3) clue selection of extended meanings, (4) correlation compare.

In recent years, cognitive linguistics has been a great influence on the study of Chinese polysemy. Yip Po-Ching (2000, pp. 275) illustrated “three different types of sense relations can be discerned in a polysemous mononym or lexeme, namely (i) ‘analogous extension’; (ii) ‘metonymic extension’; (iii) ‘metaphorical extension’. And more often, these different devices join forces to attain polysemy.” Peng Xuanwei (彭宣维, 2004) applied the metaphorical mapping theory to demonstrate the systematic nature of Chinese lexical meanings. Li Yuhong (李宇宏, 2010) analyzed four cognitive approaches to the semantic extension of polysemy in modern Chinese: transfer, substitution, salience and blending; thereby a polysemous-word-teaching model was also proposed for learning Chinese as a second language.

Another newly focused area of research is about lexicography. Zhang Bo & Xing Hongbing (张博 邢红兵, 2006) contrastingly analyzed six Chinese learner's dictionaries, especially the sequencing of polysemous senses, and concluded that: for compiling comprehensive learner's dictionaries, the frequency principle should be followed to arrange the senses of a polysemous entry to meet the need of convenient retrieval, while for the usage dictionaries, both of parts of speech and frequency should be taken into consideration. Zhou Jian (周荐, 2007) surveyed the part-of-speech tagging issue of some disyllable words in *The Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* (《现代汉语词典》*Xiàndài Hànyǔ Cídiǎn*, the 5th Edition)⁴ and gave a tentative study on the interaction between conversion and polysemous senses. Statistical approach is becoming a new trend on Chinese polysemy research as well. Su Xinchun (苏新春, 2002) analyzed the 10,007 polysemous entries collected in *The Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* (《现代汉语词典》*Xiàndài Hànyǔ Cídiǎn*, the 2nd Edition); the statistical result shows that 2,584 entries of them have three or more sense items and the grammatical functions (parts of speech) of polysemous words are directly proportional to the

⁴ Beijing 北京: The Commercial Press 商务印书馆.

quantity of their sense items. There were 1025 polysemous entries function as of two parts of speech, especially shifted among noun, verb and adjective (809 polysemous entries). Wang Hui (王惠, 2009) analyzed 10,632 Chinese polysemous words extracted from *The Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* (《现代汉语词典》*Xiàndài Hànyǔ Cídiǎn*, the 5th Edition) and found a strong correlation between the quantity of word meanings and the frequency of the word: high-frequency words tend to possess more meanings than low-frequency ones; on the other hand, high-frequency words also prove the shortest and simplest.

1. Cultural Factors in Semantic Extension and Keywords

As reviewed above, the achievement in Chinese polysemy research is impressively prolific, remarkably emphasized on the sense demarcation and the principles of semantic extension. However, there are yet very few studies from typological perspectives concentrating on the universality and the individuality of Chinese polysemy.

Polysemy, the phenomenon that an individual word or syntagma exhibits two or more distinct yet related meanings, is a very universal mechanism of any language, whereas the peculiarity also exists in a certain language's polysemous system. Cultural factors extensively influence both aspects, and likewise evidently contribute to the semantic extension of Chinese polysemy.

Although “culture”, as a concept of the social sciences and humanities, has been defined diversely and argued all along, its very essence seems to be from customs, traditions and values of a certain society or community. Cultural factors in the semantic extension of polysemous words have held more and more researchers' attention since Williams (1976) pointed out the complicity that “keywords” had indisputable relevance to the culture and society. The vocabulary roots help trace the origin and development of a range of terms. Large numbers of keywords are polysemous, which extend their meanings consequentially along with the cultural process. As Bennett, Grossberg and Morris (2005) reviewed, “the point was not merely that the meanings of words change over time but that they change in relationship to

changing political, social, and economic situations and needs”. In reverse, scholars also try to understand cultures better through their key words, such as the studies of Wuthnow (1992), Wierzbicka (1997) and so on.

In the long course of history, Chinese culture forms its uniqueness and impacts on East Asian cultural sphere. In recent years, the relevant studies on Chinese “cultural words” have been prevalent, such as Chang Jingyu (常敬宇, 1995), Su Xinchun (苏新春, 1995), De Mente (2000), He Qiliang & Zhang Ye (何其亮 张晔, 2006), Zhuang Enzhong (庄恩忠, 2007), Dai Weiping & Pei Wenbin (戴卫平 裴文斌, 2008), Fogel (2015) and so on.

Compared with the term “keyword”, “cultural word” covers many proper nouns, which are monosemantic. These monosemous words are plentiful and involve in the both aspects of material culture and spiritual civilization, including food, clothing, architecture, medicine, art, entertainment, ceremony, policy, etc. For example, 饺子 (*jiǎozi*, Chinese dumpling), 汤圆 (*tāngyuán*, round dumplings made of glutinous rice flour, traditionally eaten on the 15th day of the new lunar year), 年糕 (*niángāo*, rice cake), 粽子 (*zongzi*, traditional Chinese rice-pudding, eaten at the Dragon Boat Festival), 旗袍 (*qípáo*, cheongsam, a woman's garment dating from the Qing Dynasty), 胡同 (*hútòng*, Beijing's lanes and alleys), 针灸 (*zhēnjiǔ*, acupuncture and moxibustion, of traditional Chinese medicine), 推拿 (*tuīná*, massage, of traditional Chinese medicine), 相声 (*xiàngsheng*, crosstalk, a traditional comic performance), 昆曲 (*kūnqǔ*, one of the most ancient forms of Chinese traditional opera), 麻将 (*májiàng*, mah-jong, a game invented in China and played using 144 rectangular bamboo, bone or plastic tiles), 围棋 (*wéiqí*, go game, a traditional Chinese board game for two players with a history, it is believed, of more than 2,000 years), 及笄 (*jíjī*, [archaic] hairgrip ceremony, of a girl coming of age 15), and 计划生育 (*jìhuà shēngyù*, family planning, birth control). Some eponyms and toponyms operate in the figurative sense, such as 诸葛亮 (*Zhūgě Liàng*, 181-234, statesman and strategist in the Three Kingdoms period — now a symbol of wisdom in Chinese folklore, mastermind), 包青天 (*Bāo qīngtiān*, Justice Bao, 包拯 *Bāo Zhěng*, 999-1062, an official in the Song Dynasty — idolized in legends as a model of

honesty and justice), 西施 (*Xīshī*, beauty in the State of Yue during the late Spring and Autumn Period — beautiful woman), 阿 Q (*Ā Q*, Ah Q, a character created by 鲁迅 *Lǚ Xùn* in his novel 《阿 Q 正传》 *Ā Q Zhèngzhuàn*, *The True Story of Ah Q* — person who takes comfort in interpreting their defeats as moral victories), 泰山 (*Tàishān*, Mount Tai — symbol of great weight or importance; father in law), or 蓬莱 (*Pénglái*, a city in Shandong province — fabled abode of the immortals in Chinese mythology, fairyland). However, the figurative usage of these words is also relatively simple. The other cultural words like idioms implicate rich connotations but they are usually monosemantic too. Therefore, not all the cultural words represent the complexity as the keywords do, which is precisely because of the polysemy gained from the complex semantic extension as shown as below.

Numerous scholars have discussed Chinese keywords and their cultural meanings, although most of the studies focused on the individual words, such as Zhou Guangqing (周光庆, 1992, 2002, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012), Yu Xiangli (禹向丽, 2007), Li Bin (李彬, 2010), Wang Xiaoli (汪晓丽, 2011), Li, Ericsson and Quennerstedt (2013), Xu Chao (许超, 2014), Liu Shanshan (刘珊珊, 2014), etc. Among them, Zhou Guangqing (周光庆, 2012) comprehensively expounded the multiaspect study on “Chinese Cultural Keywords (中华文化关键词 *Zhōnghuá wénhuà guānjiàncí*)” and pointed five research procedures: (1) Tracing back to the origin when the “Chinese cultural keywords” were produced as common daily used lexis; (2) Investigating the transformation from a common word into a cultural keyword; (3) Exploring the systematic nature of each individual keyword, which macrocosmically assembles the ethnological culture, and on the other hand, determines its proper semantic features, pragmatic limits and civilized values; (4) Etymologically expanding on the cognate words generated from a same keyword; (5) Attending to cultural integration and language contact, both of that lead to the loan or the blend of keywords. Although some researchers have taken notice of the cross-cultural exchange affecting keyword evolution as mentioned in the preceding review, there is a lack of

typological approaches to the comparison of Chinese keywords with those ones in other languages, which becomes one of our concerns in this study.

2. Traditional Cultures and Chinese Polysemy

Chinese traditional culture, including both material civilization and ideologies, form the basis of Chinese people's characteristic thinking manners, and thus shape the language, especially the vocabulary. The semantic extension of Chinese polysemy is also persistently influenced by the cultural factors. The universal human values and cognition mould the commonalities of semantic extension between many different languages, while the unique inclinations of Chinese tradition determine the distinguishing features of Chinese polysemy.

2.1 Material Civilization: Exemplified with 春 (*chūn*, spring) and 秋 (*qiū*, autumn)

China is a country with a long history of farming civilization. Even till the present, agriculture still constitutes a comparatively great proportion of the national economy. Accordingly, the thoughts of physiocracy and the consciousness of seasonal phenomena are very accessible and apprehensible in China. From the ancient emperors and right down to the civilians, the sensitivity of time, climate and natural rotation has been a longstanding cultural trait. Except for offering sacrifices regularly to Heaven to pray for the country's prosperity and peace, the monarchs also worshiped the gods of earth and grain, which is the original meaning of the cultural word 社稷 (*shèjì*, gods of earth and grain; country) with the extended meaning "country". 春 (*chūn*, spring) and 秋 (*qiū*, autumn) can be another example to observe the husbandry-centered cultural factors of Chinese polysemy.

The word 春 (*chūn*, spring), in Mandarin Chinese, contains four senses⁵: 1. spring; 2. Year; 3. Life; 4. Love. According to *An Explanatory*

⁵ According to *Oxford Chinese Dictionary* (First Edition of 2010), Oxford University Press, in association with Foreign Language Teaching & Research Press (FLTRP).

Dictionary of Chinese Characters (说文解字 *Shuō wén jiě zì*), the original meaning of 春 (*chūn*, spring) is “to germinate”⁶, which is shared in common somehow with the second verbal meaning “originate or arise from” of the English corresponding word “SPRING”, as shown below. Compared with the original senses of “SPRING”, which are retrospectively “head of a well” or “rush out in a stream”, 春 (*chūn*, spring) manifestly embodies more the concentration on agriculture.

SPRING⁷: [Verb] 1. move or jump suddenly or rapidly upward or forward; 2. Originate or arise from; 3. cushion or fit (a vehicle or item of furniture) with springs; 4. become warped or split; 5. pay for, esp. as a treat for someone else; [Noun] 1. the season after winter and before summer, in which vegetation begins to appear, in the northern hemisphere from March to May and in the southern hemisphere from September to November; 2. A resilient device, typically a helical metal coil, that can be pressed or pulled but returns to its former shape when released, used chiefly to exert constant tension or absorb movement; 3. A sudden jump upward or forward; 4. a place where water or oil wells up from an underground source, or the basin or flow formed in such a way; 5. an upward curvature of a ship's deck planking from the horizontal. ORIGIN Old English *spring* (noun), *springan* (verb), of Germanic origin; related to Dutch and German *springen*. Early use in the senses ‘head of a well’ and ‘rush out in a stream’ gave rise to the figurative use ‘originate’.

The extended meanings “[literary] year” and “life, vitality” of 春 (*chūn*, spring) give direct proof of Chinese people’s susceptibility to time likewise, which also compounds a lot of disyllables or polysyllables, such as 十八春 (*shíbāchūn*, eighteen years, a novel of Eileen Chang 张爱玲 *Zhāng Àilíng*),

The same hereinafter.

⁶ The original text: 春，推也。从艸屯，从日，艸春时生也。会意，屯亦声……今隶作春字，亦作芑。

⁷ According to *New Oxford American Dictionary* (Third Edition of 2010), Oxford University Press. The same hereinafter.

青春 (*qīngchūn*, youth, [archaic] age of young people, 青: blue, green, young, youth), 枯木逢春 (*kūmùféngchūn*, get a new lease of life, 枯: withered, dried up, 木: tree, 逢: come upon), 妙手回春 (*miàoshǒuhuíchūn*, [of a doctor] effect a miraculous cure and bring the dying back to life, 妙: fine and subtle, excellent, 手: hand, 妙手: highly skilled person, 回: turn round, return).

In the figurative sense, 春 (*chūn*, spring) implies “love, lust”⁸, which exists in plenty of compounds as well, for instance: 春心 (*chūnxīn*, amorous feelings, 心: heart), 春梦 (*chūnmèng*, erotic dream, pipe dream, transient joy, 梦: dream), 春宵 (*chūnxiāo*, spring night, night of sexual bliss, 宵: night), 春宫 (*chūngōng*, pornographic picture, 宫: palace), 春药 (*chūnyào*, aphrodisiac, 药: medicine), 春风一度 (*chūnfēng yīdù*, to have sexual intercourse once, 风: wind, 一: one, 度: occasion, 一度: once), 怀春 (*huáichūn*, become sexually awakened, 怀: bosom, cherish), 卖春 (*màichūn*, sell sex, 卖: sell), 叫春 (*jiàochūn*, miaow when in heat, 叫: shout, cry), 第二春 (*dì'èrchūn*, falling in love for the second time, 第二: second) and so on.⁹ All these words abound in cultural factors obviously, and the symbolization is quite unique from other languages, although “SPRING FLING” is a collocation to imply “a brief, casual sexual or romantic relationship”, or “PRIMAVERA” in Spanish can mean “gorgeously colored things”, etc.¹⁰

The word 秋 (*qiū*, autumn), in Mandarin Chinese, expresses: 1. harvest season; 2. Autumn, fall; 3. year; 4. period of time; 5. autumn crops. According to *An Explanatory Dictionary of Chinese Characters* (《说文解字》*Shuō wén jiě zì*), the original meaning of 秋 (*qiū*, autumn) is “grain

⁸ To reason the extension clue: “germinating of a seed” can be a metaphor for budding of passion, or stirrings of love or desire.

⁹ Innocuous euphemism in place of the taboo word 性 (*xìng*, sex) is taken into consideration.

¹⁰ Instead of “SPRING” or “PRIMAVERA”, “SUMMER” and “VERANO” are more apt to symbolize affairs, such as “SUMMER LOVE”, “AMOR DE VERANO”, “ROLLO DE VERANO”, etc.

ripened”.¹¹ The extended meanings “harvest season” and “autumn crops” are still existent and reflect land cultivation, evidently testified with the compounds like 大秋 (*dàqiū*, autumn harvest, 大: big), 麦秋 (*màiqiū*, wheat harvest season, 麦: wheat), 收秋 (*shōuqiū*, gather in autumn crops, 收: gather in, collect), 护秋 (*hùqiū*, keep watch over autumn crops, 护: protect), etc. Comparatively the English corresponding words “AUTUMN” and “FALL” in reference to the falling leaves or fruits seem to originate from the primitive gathering. However before the 16th century, “harvest” was the term usually used to refer to the season, as the German word “herbst” and Scots “hairst”.¹² Thus it can be seen that the etymon and the semantic extension of 秋 (*qiū*, autumn) are truly universal.

The extended meaning “year” reveals the cultural impact on 秋 (*qiū*, autumn). The idiomatic expression 一日三秋 (*yīrìsānqiū*, a day seems as long as three years, absence makes the heart grow fonder, 一: one, 日: day, 三: three) exhibits the dialectical sense of time. 千秋 (*qiānqiū*, ages, birthday [other than one’s own], 千: thousand) is also a metaphor of “merit” or “characteristic” in the phrase 各有千秋 (*gèyǒuqiānqiū*, each has its advantages, great deal of diversity, 各: each, 有: have), reasoned from the longevity, and coincides with Hegel’s “what exists is reasonable”. Furthermore 秋 (*qiū*, autumn) can be even particularized to “a period of time [usu. troubled]”, for instance, 危急存亡之秋 (*wēijǐ cúnwáng zhī qiū*, most critical moment, 危急: critical, 存亡: live or die, 之: auxiliary word, used between an attribute and the word it modifies), 多事之秋 (*duōshìzhīqiū*, troubled times, 多: many, 事: thing, trouble, responsibility) and so on.

As the same as the sense of “love” of 春 (*chūn*, spring), 秋 (*qiū*, autumn) also reflects Chinese people’s sensitivity to season and time. For example, the words 秋波 (*qiūbō*, autumn ripples, bright eyes of a beautiful woman, amorous glance, 波: wave, wink), 伤春悲秋 (*shāngchūnbēiqiū*, grieve over the passing of spring or feel sad with the advent of autumn, 伤:

¹¹ The original text: 秋，禾穀孰也。

¹² See also the entries “autumn” and “harvest” in Harper, Douglas’s Online Etymology Dictionary <http://www.etymonline.com>.

injure, distressed, 悲: sad, pity), etc. have an inherent connotation of emotion.

Thus, the polysemous words 春 (*chūn*, spring) and 秋 (*qiū*, autumn) extend various meanings determined by material civilization like agriculture. The cultural factors have participated in forming both their universal senses and other individual items. In fact, they compound the term 春秋 (*chūnqiū*, spring and autumn, year, age) with a distinctive cultural meaning “chronicle”¹³, and then referring to the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC).

2.2 Ideology: Exemplified with 道 (*dào*, way) and 气 (*qì*, gas)

“Ideology” has been vaguely defined in many references to the media and the social sciences, and “linguistic ideology” has been always argued since Kress & Hodge (1979), Rumsey (1990) and Schieffelin, Woolard and Kroskrity (1998) made their impressive discussions about the connections between the beliefs that speakers have about language and their social and cultural world. Correspondingly, Schiffman (1996) proposed the term “linguistic culture”:

The sum totality of ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices, myths, religious strictures, and all the other cultural “baggage” that speakers bring to their dealings with language from their culture. Linguistic culture also is concerned with the transmission and codification of language and has bearing also on the culture’s notions of the value of literacy and the sanctity of texts. And of course language itself is a cultural artifact and must be counted as a part of linguistic culture.

Hereby, we adopt the term “ideology” to cover the non-material aspects of a social and cultural progress, and with Schiffman’s construct, that includes the ideas, beliefs, religion, philosophy, value systems, prejudices, stereotypes, legends, sentiments, emotions, aesthetic senses, social identity, institution, and any other notions of the certain culture and language. These

¹³ For example: *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (《春秋》), *Spring and Autumn Annals of Wu and Yue* (《吴越春秋》), etc. Even some ancient philosophical works are also titled with this term, such as *Spring and Autumn of Master Yanzi* (《晏子春秋》), *Spring and Autumn of Lüshi* (《吕氏春秋》) and so on.

cultural aspects, i.e. ideology, play a key role, rather profoundly and continuously, in shaping and influencing linguistic structures and vocabulary. Also including polysemy and semantic extensions, as Hodge's comment: Ideology "identifies a unitary object that incorporates complex sets of meanings with the social agents and processes that produced them"¹⁴. Certainly cross-cultural studies help to recognize and to characterize the interaction between the set of beliefs and the formation of polysemy in the certain social community, and therefore, as example, we compare two pairs of polysemous word, 道 (dào, way) — logos and 气 (qì, gas) — spirit, to clarify the interactive mechanism.

The word 道 (dào, way)¹⁵, in Mandarin Chinese, contains 10 substantival senses, 4 verbal meanings and other 4 classifier usages: [noun] 1. road; 2. Course; 3. way; 4. Morals; 5. teachings; 6. Taoist; 7. Skill; 8. superstitious sect; 9. Line; 10. an administrative division in ancient China. [verb] 1. Speak; 2. Express in words; 3. [used in the early vernacular] say; 4. Think. [classifier] 1. [For long and narrow objects]; 2. [for doors, walls, etc.]; 3. [for orders, questions, etc.]; 4. [For courses in a meal, stages in a procedure, etc.] According to *An Explanatory Dictionary of Chinese Characters* (说文解字 *Shuō wén jiě zì*), the original meaning of 道 (dào, way) is "pedestrian way, thoroughfare"¹⁶, which remains as the basic meaning "road, path, way, route, path" in Modern Chinese, and due to the similarity in shape, extended the senses "course, channel", "tract" and "line", such as in the compounds 河道 (*hé dào*, river course, 河: river), 航道 (*háng dào*, course, sea-route, 航:

¹⁴ See the entry "ideology" of Semiotics Encyclopedia Online:
<http://www.semioticon.com/seo/1/ideology.html>

¹⁵ In *Oxford Chinese Dictionary* (First Edition of 2010), Oxford University Press, in association with Foreign Language Teaching & Research Press (FLTRP), 道 (dào, way) has been divided to three entries 道¹ [noun], 道² [verb], 道³ [classifier]. The homonymy-like entry arrangement is questionable, because there do exist relations among the different senses of the three entries. The etymological studies produce evidences, and the clue of semantic extension is also traceable, although it seems unobvious in Modern Chinese. For further details see the subsequent analysis.

¹⁶ The original text: 道，所行道也。从辵，从𡗗。一達謂之道。

navigate), 下水道 (*xiàshuǐdào*, sewer, drain, 下: low, go down, 水: water), 呼吸道 (*hūxīdào*, respiratory tract, 呼吸: breathe), 消化道 (*xiāohuàdào*, digestive tract, 消化: digest), 横道儿 (*héngdàoer*, horizontal line, 横: horizontal, 儿: suffix [added to nouns to indicate littleness, intimacy, etc.]), 斜道儿 (*xiédàoer*, slanting line, 斜: inclined), etc. The classifier use “for long and narrow objects” is also based on the nature of “lengthening”, “extending” or “continuation” of a road, for example, 一道河 (*yī dào hé*, a river, 一: one, 河: river), 万道霞光 (*wàn dào xiáguāng*, streams of sunshine, 万: ten thousand, 霞: morning or evening glow of the sun, 光: light, 霞光: rays of morning or evening sunlight) and so on. Then it is also very logical to presume that the sense “circuit, an administrative division in ancient China”¹⁷ was extended from the implication of “borderline”. Likewise, the other classifier uses of 道 (*dào*, way) are understandable. Because the sense “line” signifies “lineation, boundary”, metaphorically “doors, walls, defense, etc.”, such as in 两道门 (*liǎng dào mén*, two doors, 两: two, 门: door, gate), 三道防线 (*sān dào fángxiàn*, three defense lines, 三: three, 防: defense, 线: thread, wire, line, 防线: line of defense), are the mapping of “lines”. Furthermore, “to line up” means “sequence, steps or stages”, so the classifier 道 (*dào*, way) can also serve “for courses in a meal, stages in a procedure, etc.”, for instance 吃四道菜 (*chī sì dào cài*, have four courses, 吃: eat, 四: four, 菜: vegetable, dish), or 省一道手续 (*shěng yī dào shǒuxù*, save one step in the process, 省: omit, save, 一: one, 手续: procedure). And it is noteworthy that this extension is rather universal, just like “COURSE” in

¹⁷ See also Zhou Zhenhe (周振鹤 2010): the administrative division 道 (*dào*, circuit) originated during the Han dynasty (206 BC - AD 220), only to be used in areas in the fringes of the Empire, which were either primarily inhabited by non-Han Chinese people, or too geographically isolated from the rest of the Han centers of power; in the Tang dynasty (618-907), 道 (*dào*, circuit) was transformed into the highest level administrative division, and China was subdivided into ten circuits; thenceforth its definition had gone through several changes as well and finally revoked. In modern times, the term is still used for unequal administrative units in Japan, Korea and some other Chinese-culture-sphered countries, such as 北海道 (Hokkaido) or 경기도 (京畿道 Gyeonggi-do).

English extends the meanings from “route” to “the successive parts of a meal”.

Almost all the verbal senses of 道 (*dào*, way) are about “utterance”.¹⁸ This semantic connection is based on the interchangeable use of its cognate word 导 (*dǎo*, guide, instruct, direct)¹⁹. “Utterance” is commonly necessary for guiding somebody on the way. Thus through 导 (*dǎo*, guide, instruct, direct), 道 (*dào*, way) extends the senses of “speak, say, express” or even “think, suppose”, for example, 能说会道 (*néngshuōhuìdào*, have the gift of the gab, 能: able, 说: speak, 会: be able to, be good at), 道歉 (*dàoqiàn*, apologize, 歉: be apologetic), 道谢 (*dàoxiè*, thank, 谢: thank), 道喜 (*dào xǐ*, congratulate sb. on a happy occasion, 喜: happy, happy event), 道是无晴却有晴 (*dào shì wú qíng què yǒu qíng*, it is said that it is not sunny, but it is. 是: be, 无: not, 晴: clear, sunny, 却: yet, but, 有: exist, have)²⁰, 当时只道是寻常 (*dāngshí zhī dào shì xúncháng*, happiness never lasts long, at that time it was only taken for granted, 当时: that time, 只: only, 是: be, 寻常: usual, ordinary)²¹, etc. Due to the “utterance” implications of 道 (*dào*, way), its classifier use “for orders, questions, etc.” is also well-reasoned, for example, 十五道题 (*shíwǔ dào tí*, fifteen questions, 十五: fifteen, 题: question), 一道命令 (*yī dào mìnglì*, an order, 一: one, 命令: order, command) and so on.

¹⁸ The fourth verbal sense “think” of 道 (*dào*, way) is actually associated with “utterance” as well. The extended clue is also apprehensible because “thinking or consideration” usually produces “opinion, idea or belief” for “expression, speaking”. The English phrase “think aloud”, which means “talk to oneself”, is a testimony in form.

¹⁹ Simplified form 导 (*dǎo*).

²⁰ Rhesis from Liu Yuxi (刘禹锡, 772-842)’s representative poetry *Zhuzhici* (《竹枝词》). The whole sentence is: 东边日出西边雨, 道是无晴却有晴 (*Dōngbiān rìchū xībiān yǔ, dào shì wú qíng què yǒu qíng*). It is sunny in the east, but in the west it is raining hard. Whether rain or sunniness you are the sunshine in my heart. It is a pun between 晴 (*qíng*, clear, sunny) and 情 (*qíng*, feeling, love).

²¹ Rhesis from Nalan Xingde (纳兰性德, 1655-1685)’s representative lyric poetry *Huanxisha* (《浣溪沙·谁念西风独自凉》).

The semantic extensions “way, method” and “skill” of 道 (*dào*, way) are very universal and comprehensible, as same as the English words “WAY”, “APPROACH”, or even “METHOD”²². “Way, road” is for reaching a destination, and this basic meaning cognitively became the metaphor of “method” or “skill” in the semantic frame of “finding a solution”, for instance, 道理 (*dàolǐ*, principle, reason, way, 理: grain, texture; reason), 门道 (*méndào*, knack, 门: door, knack), 治国之道 (*zhìguózhīdào*, way to run a country, 治国: manage state affairs, 之: auxiliary word, used between an attribute and the word it modifies), 棋道 (*qídào*, chess expertise, 棋: chess), 医道 (*yīdào*, medical expertise, 医: doctor, medical science), etc.

The other senses of 道 (*dào*, way), including “teachings, doctrine”, “morals, morality, virtue”, “Taoism, Taoist”, “theurgy, mystic arts”, “superstitious sect”, etc., are very ideological and culturally significant. The compounds rooted in these meanings are plentiful, for example, 传道 (*chuándào*, preach, propagate doctrines of ancient sages, 传: pass on, spread), 孔孟之道 (*kǒngmèngzhīdào*, doctrines of Confucius and Mencius, 孔: 孔子, Kǒngzǐ, Confucius, 551-479 BC, 孟: 孟子, Mèngzǐ, Mencius, 372-289 BC, 之: auxiliary word, used between an attribute and the word it modifies), 尊师重道 (*zūnshīzhòngdào*, respect the teacher and revere his teachings, 尊: respect, 师: teacher, 重: attach importance to), 道义 (*dàoyì*, morality, 义: justice, chivalry), 道德 (*dàodé*, morality, moral, 德: morals, mind, kindness), 古道热肠 (*gǔdàorècháng*, considerate and warm-hearted, 古: ancient times, simple and unadorned, 古道: ancient way, unsophisticated and generous, 热: hot, warm, 肠: intestines, heart, state of mind), 道教 (*dàojiào*, Taoism, a Chinese philosophy and religion which holds that “道 Tao, the Way” is the origin of all things in the universe, 教: teach, religion), 道士 (*dàoshi*, Taoist priest, 士: scholar, person), 修道 (*xiūdào*, cultivate oneself according to a religious doctrine, 修: study, practice a religious doctrine), 道术 (*dàoshù*, theurgy, Taoist mystic arts, 术: method, art), 道门

²² According to *New Oxford American Dictionary* (Third Edition of 2010), Oxford University Press, the origin of “METHOD” is via Latin from Greek “methodos (pursuit of knowledge)”, from “meta- (expressing development)” + “hodos (way)”.

(*dàomén*, superstitious sect, 门: door, gate; school, sect), 一贯道 (*Yīguàndào*, consistent way, a Chinese folk religion that emerged in 1886, 一贯: consistent, persistent), etc.

The fundamental text for philosophical and religious Taoism, *Tao Te Ching* (道德经 *Dàodé Jīng*)²³, is titled with the word 道德 (*dàodé*, morality, moral, 德: morals, mind, kindness). The semantic extension of 道 (*dào*) from “way” to “morals, virtue” via the sense “method, skill” is not particular but universal. The English word “virtue” is also similar to “virtuosity” which means “great skill in music or another artistic pursuit”.²⁴

The sense “theurgy, mystic arts” of 道 (*dào*) in its extended form is 道术 (*dàoshù*, theurgy, Taoist mystic arts, 术: method, art). During the pre-Qin period (先秦 *Xiānqín*, prior to 221 BC), plenty of necromancers (方士 *fāngshì*) were involved in particular activities 方术 (*fāngshù*, mystic arts), like making pills of immortality. When Zhang Daoling (张道陵 34-156) founded the Way of the Celestial Masters sect of Taoism (天师道 *Tiānshīdào*) in Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), 方术 (*fāngshù*, mystic arts) came to be called 道术 (*dàoshù*, theurgy, Taoist mystic arts). Thus, 道 (*dào*, way) extended the meanings of “theurgy, mystic arts” and “superstitious sect”, also via “method, skill, technology”.

The semantic extension of 道 (*dào*) from “way” to “teachings, doctrine” is even more ideological. In fact, 道 (*dào*, way), that is, the Way of Nature which cannot be given a proper name, has become the very important integrated component of Chinese conventional wisdom in ideology. De Mente (2000, pp. 44) elucidated Lao Tzu (老子, *Lǎozǐ*, ca. 600-470 BC) and his Taoism, “Lao Tzu based his philosophy on the concept that the cosmos itself

²³ According to tradition, it was written around 6th century BC by the sage Lao Tzu (老子, *Lǎozǐ*, ca. 600-470 BC). The title is an honorific given by posterity.

²⁴ See also Hansen, Chad, “Daoism”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). “Given our use of an aesthetic conception of interpretation of dao, we may think of one’s de as her ‘virtuosity’. Virtuosity exhibits itself in a performer by making his ‘interpretation’ of the thing performed (a ceremony, chant or ritual) work in the context. Thus de links dao with correct performance.”

began as One (the time before the Big Bang!); that everything that now exists sprang from this one, and thus has common origin. He added that although everything in nature is made up of the same kind of energy, each thing has a unique combination of energy atoms, and must be true to its own nature.” “The way of Truth” is the so-called “道 (dào)”. Furthermore, 道 (dào, way) not only stands as the core concept of Taoism, but also inextricably links to Confucianism and Buddhism. As Shen (2014, pp. 10, *passim*) pointed out, “In fact, there is no exact term in Chinese Classics for ‘philosophy’ as in Western civilization. Instead, terms such as *daoshu* 道术 (Dao and art of its realization), *daoxue* 道学 (Learning of Dao), *lixue* 理学 (Learning of Principles), etc., were used by Chinese scholars.” 道 (dào, way) is a trans-religious universal name for all the “doctrines”. Confucius said “吾道一以贯之 (*wú dào yīyìguànzhi*, my doctrine is that of an all-pervading unity)”, so obviously the doctrine of Confucius is also named as 道 (dào, way).²⁵ In Confucianism and Buddhism, there are a lot of terms compounded by 道 (dào, way) as well, such as 王道 (*wángdào*, kingly way, benevolent government, 王: king), 霸道 (*bàdào*, [feudal] rule by force of dictators, domineering, overbearing, potent, 霸: overlord, tyrant, hegemony, dominate), 道统 (*dàotǒng*, Confucian orthodoxy, 统: interconnected system), 知道 (*zhīdào*, understanding the way, know, realize, be aware of, 知: know), 无间道 (*wújiàn dào*, Avīci, Sanskrit and Pali for “without waves”, non-stop way, 无间: be continuous)²⁶, 中道 (*zhōngdào*, madhyamā-pratipad, Middle Way, a term that Gautama Buddha used to describe the character of the Noble Eightfold Path he discovered that lead to liberation, 中: middle), etc., and

²⁵ See also Legge, James (1893). *Confucian Analects*, Book IV Le Jin, Chapter 15: The Master said, “Shan, my doctrine is that of an all-pervading unity.” The disciple Tsang replied, “Yes.” The Master went out, and the other disciples asked, saying, “What do his words mean?” Tsang said, “The doctrine of our master is to be true to the principles of our nature and the benevolent exercise of them to others, — this and nothing more.”

²⁶ According to *Lotus Sutra*, etc., offenders keep suffering for kalpas until it has exhausted its bad karma. For this reason, Avīci hell is also known as the “non-stop way”.

some of them are even daily used vocabulary in modern times. After the emergence of 玄学 (*xuánxué*, Neo-Taoism) and 禅宗 (*chánzōng*, Zen), Chinese philosophers tend to combine Confucianism, Buddhism with Taoism. The term 道 (*dào*, way) became more used, as in the words 内圣外王之道 (*nèishèng wàiwáng zhī dào*, the way of sage within and king without, 内: interior, 圣: noble, sacred, 外: exterior, 王: king, 之: auxiliary word, used between an attribute and the word it modifies)²⁷ or 参禅悟道 (*cānchán wùdào*, practice meditation and awake to truth, 参: investigate and understand, 禅: deep meditation, Zen, 悟: realize, awaken).

On the one hand, the semantic extension of 道 (*dào*, way) is Chinese-characteristic, culturally as stated above, and linguistically due to the restriction of Chinese morphology and grammar²⁸. On the other hand, the extension from the sense of “way” to “the way of truth” or “the principle of reason” is also universal, as the theological term “Logos” that is even translated into 道 (*dào*) in the Chinese version of the Bible.

“Logos” is originated from the Greek word “λόγος” that means “word, speech, discourse, saying”, also “thought, reason”. Ancient Greek philosophers, such as Heraclitus (ca. 535-475 BC), the sophists, the Stoics, etc., used the term in different ways. In modern times, the term philosophically indicates “the rational principle that governs and develops the universe” in general. Aristotle (384-322 BC) also applied the term to refer to “the argument” in the field of rhetoric. The Gospel of John identifies “the Logos” as divine, and further Jesus Christ as the incarnate Logos. And the Neo-Platonists also used the term in various metaphysical and theological

²⁷ See also Legge, James (1891). *Kwang-ze*, Miscellaneous Chapters, Tianxia: And thus it was that the Dao, which inwardly forms the sage and externally the king, became obscured and lost its clearness, became repressed and lost its development. Every one in the world did whatever he wished, and was the rule to himself.

²⁸ See Hansen, Chad, “Daoism”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). “There are interesting differences between *dao* and ‘way’. Chinese nouns lack pluralization, so *dao* functions grammatically like a singular or mass term and semantically like a plural. The first tempts translators to render all occurrences as ‘the way’. One is better advised to treat *dao* as a collective noun—as the part-whole sum of ways. What we think of as one way would be one part of *dao*.”

senses. Contemporarily, Jung (1875-1961) adopted this term to refer to “the principle of reason and judgment, associated with the animus” in his analytical psychology.²⁹ Thus the semantic extension of “Logos” also ideologically involves in all the fields of philosophy, rhetoric, religion and psychology, as same as 道 (*dào*, way).³⁰

Another example is the polysemous word 气 (*qì*, gas, air, breath, [figurative] material energy). The original meaning of 气 (*qì*) is “thin, floating clouds; air current” or “gas in the alimentary canal”³¹. As a Chinese cultural keyword, 气 (*qì*) expresses various meanings ranging from “vapor”, “anger” to “spirit” or even “vital energy”. De Mente (2000, P307, 308) clarified that “according to Chinese theory, it is this force that empowers everything in the universe, providing the life-essence for every last thing, from the stars and planets to the atmosphere, oceans, people, plants and animals.” As the “cosmic energy”, 气 (*qì*) is “the foundation for much of Chinese philosophy and science”, such as 天地之气 (*tiāndìzhīqì*, vigor of universe, 天: sky, heaven, 地: earth, land, 之: auxiliary word, used between an attribute and the word it modifies), 气穴 (*qìxué*, acupuncture point of the traditional Chinese medicine, 穴: cave, den, acupuncture point), 气运 (*qìyùn*, fate, fortune, 运: destiny), 气功 (*qìgōng*, breathing exercise, life energy cultivation, 功: work, achievement, kungfu), 气色 (*qìsè*, people’s appearance, 色: look, color), 习气 (*xìqì*, bad habit, behavior, 习: custom), 气质 (*qìzhì*, temperament, qualities, 质: nature, quality, matter), 力气 (*lìqì*, physical strength, 力: physical strength, power, force) and so on.

The diverse meanings seem to be quite a wide span, whereas in fact the semantic extension follows a very logical and universal thread. This can be seen more distinctly by comparing with the corresponding English word “SPIRIT”. Tracing its origin to Latin “spiritus” with the meaning of “breath”, the common ground can be searched between “SPIRIT” and 气 (*qì*, thin,

²⁹ See also entry “λόγος” at Liddell & Scott (1843) *A Greek-English Lexicon*; entry “Logos” at Dictionary.com; and Soler (2014).

³⁰ See also Zhang Longxi (1992) and Zhang Tingguo (张廷国 2004).

³¹ According to the variant character 氣 (*qì*), whose radical 米 (*mǐ*, rice) shows the reasoning, because food may cause flatulence.

floating clouds, air current). The extended meanings of the two words are developed in various fields and especially influenced by their respective ideologies, however the cognitive regularity determines that they generate similar senses across the cultural gap. The following compounds and phrases reveal the corresponding senses between them.³²

MOOD	神气 <i>shénqì</i> spirited	to be in good/high spirits
	垂头丧气 <i>chuitóusàngqì</i> hang one's head in dismay	lose one's spirits
ATTITUDE	和气 <i>héqì</i> folksy, kind	in a spirit of friendship/ forgiveness
COURAGE	勇气 <i>yǒngqì</i> courage	fighting spirit; to play with great spirit
	气概 <i>qìgài</i> mettle	heroic spirit
ENERGY	元气 <i>yuánqì</i> vigor, vitality	to be full of spirit
SUPERNATURAL BEING	灵气 <i>língqì</i> anima, intelligence	nature spirits
	邪气 <i>xiéqì</i> evil influence	an evil spirit

There are more Chinese polysemous words, to a large extent, whose semantic extension got determined by traditional Chinese ideologies. For more instance, 节 (*jié*, node, joint, solar term, holiday, part, item, tally stick, formality, moral integrity, rhythm, abridge, restrict, economize, length), 义 (*yì*, justice, chivalry, gallant, meaning, righteous, adopted, artificial) and so on, express not only numerous possible meanings, but also complicated

³² In Mandarin Chinese, there are two other words 精 (*jīng*, concentrate, essence, energy, sperm, spirit, refined, skilled, exquisite, smart, extremely) and 神 (*shén*, god, spirit, expression, supernatural) that correspond to the English word "SPIRIT".

connotations due to the cultural factors. However, from the typological perspective, we can apprehend the universal inferences among their diverse extended meanings.

2.3 Other Traditional Culture Factors

Folklore can be another factor to affect semantic extension. Due to the traditional customs, social conventions, diffused beliefs, and popular myths or legends relating to a particular community, colors, animals, plants, and even the articles for daily use, etc., can imply more meanings.”

In Chinese, 黄 (*huáng*, yellow) has a verbal sense “fizzle out, fall through”, which extended from an accepted business practice. When a new store opens, the owner used to post a red bulletin reading 开业大吉 (*kāiyè dàjí*, auspicious beginning of a new enterprise). Whereas a yellow placard with 关门大吉 (*guānmén dàjí*, close down for good) was also a convention when closure. Thus 黄 (*huáng*, yellow) substituted for “closure”, then expanded the scope for all the unsuccessful things. “YELLOW” in English can also mean “cowardly”. The semantic extension derived from a phrase “yellow belly” that “comes from an account of a military skirmish in Texas” to refer to Mexican soldiers.³³

For another example, “FOX” is a metaphor of “trick, cunning, craftiness” or “sexually attractive woman”, both in the East and the West based on the cognitive universality. Furthermore, the folk tales, such as *Strange Tales from a Scholar's Studio* (聊斋志异 *Liáozhāizhìyì*)³⁴ and the allegorical fables about Reynard, etc., reinforced the impression with the animal. In Chinese, 狐疑 (*húyí*, suspicion, 狐: fox, 疑: doubt), 狐狸尾巴 (*húli wěiba*, fox's

³³ See also entry “yellow belly” at The Phrasefinder site, URL = <<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/yellow-belly.html>>. “Whether the ‘yellow’ reference was a racist allusion to skin colour, ill-health, or to a likening to snakes, lizards etc. isn't clear.”

³⁴ A collection of supernatural tales from the Qing Dynasty written by Pu Songling (蒲松龄 1640-1715). Many of the stories are about romantic love between men and foxes or ghosts posing as women.

tail, sth. that gives away a person's real character or evil intentions, 狐狸: fox, 尾巴: tail), 狐媚 (*húmèi*, entice by flattery, 媚: curry favor with, ingratiating), 狐狸精 (*húlijīng*, vixen, coquette, seductress, 精: spirit) and such words reveal the trait in common. More interestingly, in Spanish, the feminine “zorra” derogatorily means “bitch, hooker, prostitute”, yet to some extent, the masculine “zorro” has a more commendatory or even heroic sense “shrewd and cunning person”, due to the character “Zorro” created by Johnston McCulley (1883-1958).

Many daily implements also have extended meanings depending on the folkways. For instance, 斗 (*dǒu*, wine vessel, dry measure for grain) derives an adjective meaning “dou-sized” from its container and weight uses. However, the “dou-size” is partial arbitrary with the influence of social common sense: the rather objective 斗大 (*dǒudà*, dou-sized, 大: big, size), the exaggerated 斗胆 (*dǒudǎn*, boldly, 胆: gall bladder; guts, courage), and the narrowed 斗室 (*dǒushì*, small room, 室: room). The relativity of dou-size is represented by comparing the target and 斗 (*dǒu*, wine vessel, dry measure for grain) as an object of reference. The word “TON” was a variant of “tun” in Middle English, both spellings being used for the container and the weight. The meanings were differentiated in the late 17th century. Nowadays, “TON” can mean various units, such as “short ton”, “long ton”, “metric ton”, “displacement ton”, “freight ton”, “gross ton”, “register ton”, etc. And it even refers to “a unit of refrigerating power” and “a measure of capacity for various materials”. Furthermore, in colloquial British, “TON” is also applied to “speed” and “score”.

Cognitive scientists argue that the form of the human body largely determines the nature of the human mind. Hence the theory of “Embodiment” has been developed to talk about the universality of metaphors, as the metaphors about viscera exist throughout different languages. However, the specific metaphorical mapping between the source domain and the target frequently lacks of compatibility or similarity between languages, which lies on their cultural factors to a substantial extent. For example, “GUTS” signify “courage”. In Chinese, the metaphor focuses on a

particular internal organ 胆 (*dǎn*, gallbladder, courage). *The Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon* (黄帝内经 *Huángdì Nèijīng*)³⁵ asserts “gallbladder, likened to a mediator, with decisive character”³⁶. The “decisive character” implies “courage”.

Various cultural factors can integratively operate on semantic extension as well. For example, 醋 (*cù*, vinegar) has an extended sense of “jealousy”, as in the compounds 吃醋 (*chīcù*, be jealous, 吃: eat), 醋意 (*cùyì*, jealousy, 意: meaning), 醋坛子 (*cùtánzi*, jealous person, 坛子: earthenware jar), etc. In English, “SOUR” also refers to “feeling or expressing resentment, disappointment, or anger”. With allusion to Aesop’s fable *The Fox and the Grapes*, “SOUR GRAPE” means “an attitude in which someone adopts a negative attitude to something because they cannot have it themselves”. The “sour-bitter confusion” is a common phenomenon in the sensory world. However, besides the universal perception, a historical anecdote also facilitated the semantic extension of 醋 (*cù*, vinegar, jealousy). According to Liu Su (刘铄 ?-?)’s *Anecdotes of the Sui and Tang Dynasties* (隋唐嘉话 *Suí Táng Jiāhuà*), in the early Tang Dynasty (618-907), Emperor Taizong (唐太宗 598-649) tried several times to reward his chancellor Fang Xuanling (房玄龄 579-648) with a beautiful concubine. However, Fang Xuanling politely refused always because his wife, née Lu, was well known with her jealousy. Thus Emperor Taizong offered her an alternative of a glass of poisonous wine or accepting the beauty. Lu drank the wine resolutely, although it was not poisoned but only a test. Mao Hairong (毛海蓉 2009) argued that people embellished the story by replacing vinegar for the poisonous wine due to the flourishing brewing industry in Tang Dynasty. Thus 醋 (*cù*) extends the meaning from “vinegar” to “jealousy”.

³⁵ China’s earliest classic work on medicine that is generally dated by scholars to between the late Warring States period (475-221 BC) and the Han dynasty (206 BC - AD 220).

³⁶ The original text: 胆者，中正之官，决断出焉。

3. Modern Cultures and Chinese Polysemy

To attribute the semantic extension of Chinese polysemy to some cultural factors signifies not only the consideration of the traditional elements, but also rescrutinizing the modern essentials, since cultural history is an uninterrupted process.

3.1 Modern Politics

The development of modern politics is a notable factor that brought out plenty of words extending new meaning. For instance, the word 革命 (*gémìng*, revolution, totally transforms, 革: to transform, 命: life, order, God's will) was originally derived from *Classic of Changes* (易经 *Yìjīng*)³⁷, with the meaning of “change of God's will” and then “dynastic changes”.³⁸ After the Industrial Revolution, French Revolution, Japan Meiji Restoration, etc., the Chinese word obtained the loan meanings of “revolution” and “totally transform”. And moreover, during Chinese Revolution, especially Mao's era, 革命 (*gémìng*, revolution) started holding a connotation of “proletarian struggles”. Moreover, 自由 (*zìyóu*, freedom, free, unrestrained, liberty), 社会 (*shèhuì*, a fair for welcoming the Earth God, mass organization, society), 民主 (*mínzhǔ*, democracy, democratic centralism), 权利 (*quánlì*, interest, right), and suchlike neologisms extended their meanings in the effect of developed modern politics.³⁹ In very recent years, 和谐 (*héxié*, harmonious) also extended a new meaning of “harmony of society” due to politics factors, then as well as 河蟹 (*héxiè*, freshwater crab, internet censorship).⁴⁰

³⁷ An ancient divination text and the oldest of the Chinese classics; the earliest sections can be traced to the Western Zhou period (1046-771 BC).

³⁸ The original text: 天地革而四时成，汤武革命，顺乎天而应乎人。

³⁹ See also Wang Ban (2011) and Fogel (2015).

⁴⁰ Since the Chinese Communist Party announced the goal of constructing a “Harmonious Society” in 2004, usually cited by the government of China as the reason for censorship, Chinese netizens began to use the word 和谐 (*héxié*, harmonious) as a euphemism for censorship. Afterwards the word 和谐 (*héxié*, harmonious — censorship) itself began to be censored, therefore a near-homophone

3.2 Social Advocations

Since the Chinese economic reform (改革开放 *Gǎigé kāifàng*) started from the late 1970s, China keeps striving for development and prosperity. Wealth has been simply admired for so many years. However recently the “money first” advocacy seems to waver because the quick fortunes and upstarts have caused a variety of social problems. Reflecting upon “new money” leads to the tendency of ethical judgment. In this context, the word 土豪 (*tǔháo*, local tyrant)⁴¹ extended the sense of “new rich”⁴², of which, 土 (*tǔ*, earth, unrefined, corny) implies “uncultured” or “show-off, vain, garish” and 豪 (*háo*, despot) means “rich and powerful”. Additionally, the cyber-ligature variant of 壕 (*háo*, moat, trench, 土+豪) also extended the same meaning of “new rich”.

3.3 Popular Recreation

Modern media and network information have renewed the form of popular entertainment. As a result, Internet slangs emerged in large numbers, and many of them come from semantic extension. For example, 马甲 (*mǎjiǎ*, waistcoat, vest) has extended a new sense of “online pseudonym, sockpuppet”, which heads from a joke about “waistcoat”⁴³. And due to a

河蟹 (*héxiè*, freshwater crab — internet censorship) is frequently used in place of 和谐 (*héxié*, harmonious — censorship).

⁴¹ In the history of Land Reform (土地改革 *Tǔdì gǎigé*) and Social Class Identification (阶级成分划分 *Jiējí chéngfēn huàfēn*) in China, 土豪 (*tǔháo*, local tyrant) also referred in particular to “landlord” and “Kulak, rich peasant”.

⁴² The sense stems from a microblog post at Sina.com: A young man asks a Zen master, “I am wealthy but unhappy. What should I do?” The Zen master responds, “Define wealthy.” The young man answers, “I have millions in the bank and three apartments in central Beijing. Is that wealthy?” The Zen master silently holds out a hand, inspiring the young man to a realization: “Master, are you telling me that I should be thankful and give back?” The Zen master says, “No ... Tuhao (土豪), can I become your friend?”

⁴³ A tiger was chasing a snake. The snake dived into a river for cover. Shortly afterwards a turtle surfaced and the tiger caught him, “You jerk, do you think I would

comic show broadcast in China Central Television during the Spring Festival of 2000, the new meaning was spread all over the country rapidly.

3.4 Cross-cultural Adaptation

In the process of globalization, cross-cultural adaption reshapes our cognitive structures on a monumental scale. Exotic cultures also drive the semantic extension of many words, no matter phonetastically, morphologically or pure-semantically.

For instance, 粉丝 (*fěnsī*, fine vermicelli) developed a new meaning “fans” in recent years. Besides of the loan pronunciation (*fěnsī* — fans), there are also several reasons to cause the semantic extension. In Chinese, there are another native nominal bound morpheme -迷 (*-mí*, enthusiast)⁴⁴ that can only form compounds such as 戏迷 (*xì mí*, theatre-goers, 戏: play), 影迷 (*yǐng mí*, fan [of film or a movie star], 影: film, movie), 球迷 (*qiú mí*, ball game fan, 球: ball), 歌迷 (*gē mí*, fan [of song or a singer], 歌: sing, song), 爵士乐迷 (*juéshìyuè mí*, jazz fan, 爵士乐: jazz), etc. Thus, because -迷 (*-mí*, enthusiast) cannot stand alone as a word, in this semantic field, the hypernym is a lexical gap. That is, Chinese native lexicon lacks a superordinate term for the set of hyponyms. Another translation for “FAN” is 狂热者 (*kuáng rè zhě*, fanatic, 狂热: rabid, craze, 者: [suffix] doer). However, the trisyllabic term is a little unpopular, because it deviates from the disyllabic trend of Chinese lexicalization. Therefore, responding to the idol-making and the celebrity effect in popular culture all over the world, 粉丝 (*fěnsī*, fine vermicelli) extended a new sense “fan” to fill the lexical vacancy on account of its similar sound to the plural form of “FAN”, although syntactically 粉丝 (*fěnsī*, fine vermicelli, fan, fans) can also operate as a singular.

酷 (*kù*, cool) is another neologism. The native word 酷 (*kù*, cruel,

misrecognize you after putting on a waistcoat?” Hence, 马甲 (*mǎ jiǎ*, waistcoat, vest) extended the meaning of “online pseudonym, sockpuppet” via “camouflage, disguise”.

⁴⁴ 迷 (*mí*) can also be free (a word) with its verbal meanings such as “confuse”, “be confused” and “be crazy about”.

extremely) bears resemblance to the English word “COOL” in so many respects of articulation (kù — cool), semantics and cognitive mechanism. The compound word 冷酷 (*lěngkù*, unfeeling, 冷: cold, frosty, 酷: cruel) offers a clue that 酷 (*kù*, cruel) cognitively connects with “chilliness, coolness”. In English, “COOL” informally expresses the meanings “excellent”, “fashionably attractive or impressive” and “acceptance or agreement”, etc. 酷 (*kù*, cruel, extremely) developed along parallel lines with “COOL” by borrowing these usages.

Other than the increasing cultural fusion and language contact, the worldwide convergent values and the common popularity among different cultures can also act as the trigger for semantic extension. A typical case is that 晒 (*shài*, shine on, dry in the sun, sunbathe) extended a new sense “expose” due to the pervasive self-exposure and over-sharing⁴⁵ on social network sites, such as 晒工资 (*shài gōngzī*, expose wages), 晒照片 (*shài zhàopiàn*, share photos online), 晒收藏 (*shài shōucáng*, exhibit collections online) and so on.

4. Conclusion

As above, the semantic extension of Chinese polysemy is generally influenced by cultural factors. The traditional aspects thereof, especially the ideologies, have profound effects on forming Chinese cultural keywords. Besides, the modern civilization is also an important consideration that contributes to many neologisms, so that polysemy is always in a sustained yet dynamic progress.

Chinese polysemy reveals abundant inherent distinctive characteristics, but nevertheless, from a typological perspective, we can also apprehend its universal respect of semantic extension mechanism that is found in many different languages.

⁴⁵ 晒 (*shài*, shine on, dry in the sun, sunbathe, expose) is also similar in pronunciation to English word “SHARE”.

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