

## Meaning Construction of Personification in Discourse Based on Conceptual Integration Theory

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### Abstract

This article deals with meaning construction of personification in discourse from the standpoint of conceptual integration theory by drawing on examples from literary works, textbooks, other scholars' articles and even websites. The definition, classification, linguistic structures and realization forms of personification are also discussed. Relatively detailed analyses of meaning construction of different personifications in discourse are provided by making use of different conceptual integration network models. Meaning construction of personification is a very complex process. Conceptual integration theory has very powerful explanatory forces for the meaning construction of personifications in discourse.

**Key words:** Personification; Meaning construction; Conceptual integration theory

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### INTRODUCTION

Personification is frequently used in literature, art and daily expression. The study of personification has a long

and rich tradition and is a focus of research in literature, art, rhetoric, and linguistics. In literary works, human qualities are given to animals, objects or ideas by means of personification. In art, personification means representing a non-human object as if it were human. In rhetoric and art studies, personification and allegory are closely related. "Talking about personification means talking about allegory" (Melion & Ramakers, 2016, p.2). Scholars and art historians even use the term "personification allegory" to describe the procedure and result of creating allegory through personification. Paxson (1994, p.1) holds the view that personification, or prosopopoeia, has drawn serious attention only in recent critical and literary theory. For years personification was automatically equated with allegory. With the development of cognitive science, cognitive linguistics has become mainstream schools of thought and personification has become a focus of research in cognitive linguistics. Personification within cognitive studies is usually regarded as one of the most basic ontological metaphors (Kövecses, 2002; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). The Metaphor Identification Procedure (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) and Steen's five-step procedure (1999; 2009) are combined to present an integral model investigating the different linguistic forms, conceptual structures and communicative functions of personification in discourse (Dorst, 2011). Connectionist theories of conceptual metaphor and findings on the neurocorrelates of aesthetic response are also joined together to account for the application of personification in art and literature (Bocarova, 2016). Cognitive linguistics holds the view that the structure of language reflects the conceptual system of the human mind (Evans & Green, 2006; Geeraerts, 1997; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Up to now, the definition, classification, linguistic structures and realization forms of personification are still controversial and it remains unclear how the meaning of personification is constructed and analyzed. As conceptual integration is a new approach to meaning construction of language, this

article probes into personification in discourse from the perspective of conceptual integration theory in cognitive linguistics by drawing on examples from literary works, textbooks, other scholars' articles or websites and attempts to reveal how the meaning construction of personification in discourse occurs.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Personification is omnipresent and has many sources. As a literary device, personification involves the projection of characteristics that normally belong to human beings only onto inanimate objects, animals, deities, or forces of nature. It can convey the writer's emotions or feelings. It is the result of creative imagination and reflects the way people understand the world.

### 1.1 The Definition of Personification

As for the definition of personification, there is still much debate (Edgecombe, 1997; Hamilton, 2002; Paxson, 1994). Within cognitive linguistics, Lakoff and Johnson (1980, pp.33-34) define personification as an obvious ontological metaphor "where the physical object is further specified as being a person". In their opinion, "personification is a general category that covers a wide range of metaphors". Lakoff & Turner (1989, pp.36-39) interpret personification related to the EVETNS ARE ACTIONS metaphor, emphasizing that it should be distinguished from "mere agency" in which no real agent is identified. Graesser et al. (1989, p.141) sees personification as "another strategy of facilitating comprehension by giving abstract processes and notions a concrete conceptual foundation that is familiar to members of a culture" and occurs "when animals, objects, social organizations, and abstract notions are given qualities of people".

In literary studies, Hamilton (2002, p.411) provides the following definition of personification: "We personify when we metaphorically ascribe agency to normally inanimate objects, turning non-existent or imaginary entities into realistic actors or agents". "Personification is merely a categorization issue." Feng (2005, p.177) defines personification as "a figure of speech that gives human form or feelings to animals, or life and personal attributes to inanimate objects, or to ideas and abstractions". Melion & Ramakers (2016, p.1) also define personification as "the rhetorical figure by which something not human is given a human identity or face". It embodies meaning and emotion, operating "in multiple registers—sensory and spiritual, visible and invisible, concrete and abstract"—and dealing "in facts, opinions and beliefs".

The above-mentioned analysts' definitions of personification vary to a certain degree as they define personification in their own fields of research. Although there are various definitions about personification, they share more similarities than differences. This article regards personification as a kind of linguistic form that

embodies meaning. It attributes human nature, feelings, form, qualities or characteristics to animals, objects, or even abstractions. It is widely used in literature, art, films, etc.

### 1.2 The Classification of Personification

Personification describes all kinds of objects as human beings and can be divided into the following three kinds: living creature personification, nonliving creature personification and abstraction personification (Zhu, 1991).

#### 1.2.1 Living Creature Personification

This kind of personification personifies plants or animals and attributes them human actions, behaviors, qualities, thoughts, feelings, etc. It usually helps to exaggerate the atmosphere and makes readers have the feeling of being on the scene, e.g.:

(1) The rose in the garden slipped bud,

And she laughed in the pride of her youthful blood. (Austin Dobson, *The rose and the gardener*)

(2) Mosquitoes were using my ankles for filling stations.

(<http://ishare.iask.sina.com.cn/f/8PU5BMMe0IL.html>, accessed on 1 March, 2018)

In (1), the poet Austin Dobson described the rose as a youthful girl and attributed it human actions such as "slip" and "laugh". Obviously, the rose was personified and endowed with human actions. In (2), mosquitoes were personified. The mosquitoes sucking blood from my ankle were described as drivers who were filling gas at gas stations.

#### 1.2.2 Non-Living Thing Personification

Non-living things include natural phenomena, such as mountains, rivers, lakes, the earth, stars, the moon, the sun, and clouds. It also includes artificial products, such as houses, ships, and vehicles. This kind of personification transfers human subjective consciousness or feelings to those non-living creatures, e.g.:

(3) The young moon lies on her back tonight as is her habit in the tropics, and as, I think, is suitable if not seemly for a virgin. (V. Sackville-West, *No Signpost in the Sea*)

(4) The racing car strained impatiently at the starting line. (Zhang, 2010)

In (3), the moon is personified as a young virgin and has been attributed a human trait "young" and a human action "lie on her back". In (4), the racing car was personified because it strained impatiently at the starting line just like a human being.

#### 1.2.3 Abstraction Personification

This kind of personification attributes human speeches, actions, behaviors and so on to abstract objects, such as time, opinions, diseases, hunger and wars. In that way,

authors' thoughts and feelings have been expressed and it adds the sense of wit and humor to the linguistic form, e.g.:

(5) Liquor talks mighty loud when it gets loose from the jug.

(<http://ishare.iask.sina.com.cn/f/8PU5BMMe0IL.html>, accessed on 1 March, 2018)

(6) Leukemia took the country girl to town to see a doctor. (Peng, 2013)

In (5), liquor, an abstract object, is personified here because it talks mighty loud when it gets loose from the jug. In (6), leukemia, a kind of disease which has no hands or feet, was personified because it was endowed with the human action of taking the country girl to town to see a doctor and made her reason to go to town to see the doctor more prominent.

### 1.3 The Linguistic Structures and Realization Forms of Personification

#### 1.3.1 The Linguistic Structures of Personification

The linguistic structures of personification are varied. They can be "nonhuman subject + predicate verb (used for human beings only) + others", "others + predicate verb (used for human beings only) + nonhuman object + others" and many others (Zhu, 2010). Their structural bases are to describe animals or objects as human beings and to attribute them human actions or feelings, for instance:

(7) The window winked at me. (Zhang, 2010)

(8) I love to see a young girl go out and grab the world by the lapels. (M. Angelou, *Kicking Ass*)

The linguistic structure of the personification in (7) is "nonhuman subject + predicate verb (used for human beings only) + others". In this example, the window was attributed the human action "wink". In fact, the inanimate window could never perform any human action. Actions like "wink" are usually performed by human beings. After the window was attributed the human action "wink", it had human flexibility and the ability to express feelings. The linguistic structure of the personification in (8) is "others + predicate verb (used for human beings only) + nonhuman object + others". In this example, the predicate verb is "grab" and its object "the world". "The world" in this example has been personified because it has lapels.

#### 1.3.2 The Linguistic Realization Forms of Personification

Personification comes into being in many ways and the main linguistic realization forms of personification include the following: describing animals or objects by using verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives and adverbs that are suitable for human being only (Zhou, 2008), for instance:

(9) Cordell Hull in the age of print, observed that a lie goes half way around the world before truth has time to get its trousers on.

(Mortimer B. Zuckerman)

(10) The wind is our friend, anyway, he thought. Then he added, sometimes, and the great sea is our friends and our enemies. And bed, he thought, bed is my friend. (Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*)

(11) Coke is a cruel mistress, man. She doesn't care who she takes from. (Zhou, 2008)

(12) The angry winds blew last night.

The most handsome flower is not the sweetest.

The thirsty soil drank in the rain. (Peng, 2013)

(13) The clock on the wall ticked loudly and lazily, as if it had time to spare. (Peng, 2013)

In (9), the author compares the lie and the truth to human beings and uses verbs that are suitable for human being only such as "go", "have" and "get" to describe them. In the end, new semantic associations and intentions have been established, and the objects or phenomena that the author wants to describe become more vivid and easier to comprehend.

In (10), the wind, the sea and bed are the old man's friends and enemies. These non-living objects have been attributed human traits and thus have become more visualized. In his struggle with the shark, the old man has to conquer the sea and calls it friend. We can see the old man has mixed affections with the sea.

In (11), "she" does not refer to someone but "coke". The author personifies coke as a cruel mistress and the pronouns used here are ironic. We can understand the author's hatred to coke.

In (12), "angry", "handsome" and "thirsty" are adjectives usually used to describe human feelings, appearance, states or qualities, but in this example they are used to describe the winds, the flower and the soil. Thus, these non-living things or objects have human appearance or feelings and have made a deep impression on readers.

In (13), the author uses the adverbs "loudly" and "lazily" that are suitable for human being only to describe how the clock on the wall ticked, so that it had human characters and states, and a vivid picture spreads before the readers.

Cognitive linguistics holds the view that language is all about meaning (Geeraerts, 2006, p.3). In the following sections we will discuss how the meaning construction of personification in discourse occurs within the framework of conceptual integration theory.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL INTEGRATION THEORY

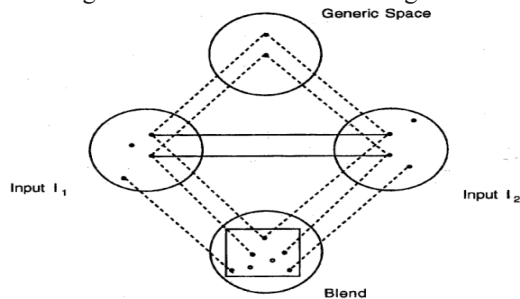
Conceptual integration theory, a cognitive theory about meaning construction, was also known as conceptual blending theory. It was put forward by Fauconnier &

Turner (2002) on the basis of conceptual metaphor theory by Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and mental space theory by Fauconnier (1994). In cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor refers to the understanding of one idea or conceptual domain in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.5). A conceptual domain can be any coherent organization of human experience. Conceptual metaphor theory involves cross-domain mappings between a source domain and an abstract one. According to conceptual metaphor theory, metaphors, which are structure mappings from the source domain to the target one, are not just a way of expressing ideas through language, but a way of thinking about things (Ungerer & Schmid, 1996, pp.118-121). Mental space theory was developed in response to mainstream views of meaning (Fauconnier, 1994, p.xix). Mental spaces, which are equivalent to conceptual domains in conceptual metaphor theory, are the cognitive domains or the small conceptual packets that people construct in the course of talking or thinking. The construction of mental spaces is restrained by such factors as grammar, culture and context, and the blended concept is mapped between spaces.

Conceptual integration theory was put forward by absorbing the advantages of conceptual metaphor theory and overcoming its drawbacks. Conceptual integration theory, a partial development of mental space theory, is composed of four basic mental spaces: a generic space, input space 1, input space 2 and a blended space (the blend). Conceptual integration, which operates according to a set of principles, occurs during online dynamic meaning construction. A conceptual structure's meaning construction process begins with the two input spaces. Between these two input spaces there is a partial cross-space mapping, which connects counterparts in these two input spaces and creates a more abstract and schematic structure. The generic space maps onto each of the inputs and contains what the two input spaces have in common. In conceptual integration, structures from the two input spaces as well as the generic space are projected to a separate space, the blended space. It is the most important space in which conceptual blending occurs and linguistic concept is produced. The projection of structures to the blended space is selective because not all the elements in the input spaces are projected to the blended space. The blended space is the site for central cognitive work. It contains not only generic structure captured in the generic space but also more specific structure in the input spaces. Composition, completion and elaboration lead to emergent structure in the blended space (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998). Composition involves attributing elements from the input spaces to blending relations that do not exist in the separate inputs. Blending recruits great background knowledge and pattern completion is the most basic kind of recruitment. Dynamic completion may recruit new principles and logic during elaboration (Fauconnier &

Turner, 1998). It is in the emergent structure that meaning construction is completed. Thus, the four mental spaces in conceptual integration theory are mutually mapping and interconnected. They establish a conceptual integration network. The basic diagram of conceptual integration theory can be illustrated in Figure 1.

Compression of vital relations is an important means of conceptual integration. All kinds of relations are compressed into one network space and thus conceptual integration comes into being. Compression of vital relations in the process of conceptual integration can be generalized as "distance compression", which includes the compression of physical distance and mental distance. Compression of vital relations leads to change of relations and change connects elements in different mental spaces so that the conceptual integration network becomes a connected entity. Connection is the basis of the existence of the blended space and the essence of conceptual integration is blending of relations. The relation of connection joins different conceptual spaces together and thus forms a cognitive network.



**Figure 1**  
**The Basic Diagram of Conceptual Integration Theory**  
(Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p.46)

The blend operates on a series of uniform, structural and dynamic optimality principles such as integration, topology, web, unpacking and relevance (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, pp.328-333). According to the principle of integration, every mental space in the structure should have integration so as to achieve an integrated blend. The principle of topology refers to the fact that it is optimal for the relations of the element in the blend to match those of its counterpart. The principle of web means that the web of appropriate connections to the input spaces must be maintained easily by manipulating the blend as a unit. The principle of unpacking holds the view that the undertaker must be enabled to unpack the blend to reconstruct the whole network. According to the principle of relevance, any element in the blend should have relevance, such as relevance for establishing links to other spaces as well as for running the blend (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p.333). The above-mentioned principles manifest that concepts can be integrated and conceptual integration networks can be established reasonably. Based on the principles, conceptual integration network models can be classified

into the following four types: simplex networks, mirror networks, single-scope networks and double-scope networks (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, pp.119-135). In the following section we will see that each of them has its application in the meaning construction of different personifications in discourse.

### 3. MEANING CONSTRUCTION OF PERSONIFICATION IN DISCOURSE BASED ON CONCEPTUAL INTEGRATION THEORY

#### 3.1 Meaning, Meaning Construction and Meaning Inconsistency of Personification in Discourse

Essentially speaking, meaning is conceptual and is motivated by cognitive processes. Cognition develops through meaning of words and language (Fu, 2015). Word meaning emerges in the shape of concepts (Rosch, 1975). Conceptual integration theory holds the view that human beings possess the most elaborate forms such as language, math, music and art because they have the most effective abilities of meaning construction. What is behind a linguistic form is not a thing but the human power to construct meaning (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, pp.5-6). Meaning construction is really an active process. In this process, apart from linguistic cues, people also use non-linguistic ones, such as contextual and background knowledge (Coulson, 2001). Meaning construction of personification is a very complex process. It can be understood by means of the process of psychological mechanisms and cognitive operation. The word is the starting point of the description of language meaning (Sinclair, 2004, p.24), so the meaning construction of personification also begins with the word. "Words evoke concepts and concepts in turn designate referents in the projected text world" (Dorst, 2011). The basic condition of meaning construction of personification in discourse is meaning inconsistency or incongruity (Dorst, 2011), which refers to the phenomenon that semantic selection restrictions are violated in language meaning construction. However, meaning inconsistency is only a clue and the working mechanism of personification is the inference process. When analysts are involved in studying personification in discourse from the linguistic level, the role of word class cannot be ignored (Dorst, 2011). Personification in discourse can be regarded as an extended unit of meaning (EUM), whose elements include node word, collocation, colligation, semantic preference, and semantic prosody (Sinclair, 2004, pp.24-48). Inconsistency in any of the above-mentioned elements may cause inconsistency of the whole EUM. The node word of personification in discourse is a noun which is usually something and its collocation is inconsistent.

Meaning inconsistency in personification is mainly manifested by incongruity between the node word and its collocation, for example:

(14) Dawn was beginning to prowl about the sky and put out the stars. (Feng, 2005, p.180)

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary (Hornby, 2002), the noun "dawn", the verb "prowl" and the verb phrase "put out" have the following descriptions:

Dawn: (Hornby, 2002, p.362)  
n 1(a) [U] time of day when light first appears; daybreak

Prowl: (Hornby, 2002, p.1194)  
1 (a) [I, Ip]~(about/around) move quietly or cautiously  
(b) [Tn] move about, through or in (a place) in this way  
2 [I, Ip] ~ (about/around) walk or wander restlessly

Put sth out: (Hornby, 2002, p.1210)  
(f) cause sth to stop burning  
(g) switch sth off

In (14), the node word is the noun "dawn", whose collocation with "prowl" or "put out" is inconsistent as actions expressed by them usually belong to human beings. Apparently, meaning inconsistency exists between the noun "dawn" and the verb "prowl" as well as the verb phrase "put out". "Dawn" in this example is personified because it has been endowed with human actions.

#### 3.2 Meaning Construction of Personification in Discourse Based on Conceptual Integration Theory

Frame is another key issue in the meaning construction of personification in discourse. "A frame is any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one concept it is necessary to understand the whole system; introducing any one concept results in all of them becoming available." (Petrucci, 1996, p.1) Mental spaces are connected to "frames", or long-term schematic knowledge (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p.40). Frame-shifting "is semantic reorganization that occurs when incoming information is inconsistent with an initial interpretation" (Coulson, 2001, p.vii). In the course of meaning construction of the personification in (14), "dawn" was personified as a human being by means of imagination. "Imagination has wide latitude in recruiting, projecting, and blending additional background knowledge, context, and memories in order to develop a full meaning on the basis of a particular mapping scheme and a choice of particular domains and counterpart elements." (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p.166) Human brain can even run imaginative simulation in the absence of external stimulus (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p.6).

##### 3.2.1 Meaning Construction of Personification in Discourse by Simplex Networks

Meaning construction of the personification in (14) can

be illustrated by simplex networks, the basic conceptual integration network model. In the networks, frame is in one input space and some of its elements are in the other input space. In input 1 of (14) is the frame of dawn: light was beginning to appear in the sky and the stars were beginning to disappear. And in input 2 are some of the elements in the frame of dawn: at dawn people who had got up were beginning to prowl about their rooms and turn off the lights. There is a partial mapping between these two input spaces and a frame-to-values connection exists between them. The generic space reflects what the two input spaces have in common: a more abstract and systematic structure about what was happening at dawn. In conceptual integration, the abstract frame of dawn from input 1 is projected onto the blend; at the same time, some relevant information about the people in input 2 is also projected onto the blend while some unimportant information is discarded, thus the first step of conceptual integration, composition, is finished. The second stage of conceptual integration is completion, which brings an additional structure to the blend: something unusual was happening at dawn. Thirdly, by means of elaboration, the familiar structure is recruited into the blend to form a hybrid frame. A series of complex cognitive activities have been elaborated and expanded, thus the emergent structure has come into being. In order to make “dawn” more prominent, the doer of the action “people” in input 2 was omitted. “Dawn” was attributed human actions such as “prowl about the sky” and “put out the stars”, and that is the meaning construction process of the personification in (14).

### 3.2.2 Meaning Construction of Personification in Discourse by Mirror Networks

Mirror networks are a little more complex than simplex networks. In mirror networks, all the four mental spaces share the same organizing frame and cross-space mappings between the two input spaces can be put into correspondence easily. Now consider the personification in (4), The racing car strained impatiently at the starting line. In the example, the racing car was personified. The example concerns the same organizing frame of a tense car race with two sub-events. In input 1, the sub-event of the frame is that the racing car with many others waited at the starting line. And in input 2, the sub-event of the frame is that the driver of the racing car with many drivers strained impatiently at the starting line. There is a partial mapping and some correspondences between these two input spaces: “the racing car” and “the driver of the racing car”, “waited” and “strained” and so on. In the generic space, the more abstract and systematic structure is the scene at the tense car race. Therefore, the organizing frame of all the mental spaces is that “the car race was so tense that the driver of the racing car strained impatiently at the starting line.” In the blended space, relevant information from the two input spaces and the generic space is projected and all the elements

are composed. After that, the background knowledge that drivers at car races easily get nervous and impatient is activated, so completion is accomplished. By means of elaboration, previous correspondences are brought forth to the emergent structure. In order to highlight the tensity of the car race, the author held the view that not only the driver but also the racing car itself strained impatiently at the starting line. In the end, the element “the driver” was omitted and replaced by “the racing car”, hence the meaning construction of the personification in (4) has come into being.

### 3.2.3 Meaning Construction of Personification in Discourse by Single-Scope Networks

Single-scope networks can also be applied to account for meaning construction of personification in discourse with different organizing frames. In the networks, two input spaces have different organizing frames, one of which is projected to organize the blend, so in the networks, the projection to the blended space is highly asymmetric. Now consider the personification in (6), Leukemia took the country girl to town to see a doctor. Input 1 is the frame of leukemia, a fatal disease. Patients who suffer from it have to be taken to see the doctor. And input 2 is the frame of a country girl who suffered from leukemia. She had to be taken to town by someone to see a doctor, so the abstract structure in the generic space is that someone took a patient who suffered from Leukemia to town to see the doctor, which lays a solid foundation for the cross-space mapping between the two input spaces and subsequent selective projections into the blended space. In the blended space, only the frame of leukemia is projected. Leukemia corresponds to someone who took the country girl to town to see the doctor and patients to the country girl who suffered from leukemia, thus composition is finished. According to common sense, a patient has to be taken by someone else to see the doctor. The common sense combines with the case of the country girl, and completion in conceptual integration is accomplished. From elaboration of conceptual integration, it is easy to see that “leukemia” became the doer of the action for the sake of prominence, thus the meaning construction of the personification in (6) has occurred.

### 3.2.4 Meaning Construction of Personification in Discourse by Double-Scope Networks

In double-scope networks, two inputs are organized by different frames, but some topology is projected from both input spaces into the blend. The blended space produces emergent structure of its own and finally a richer and more specific integration is produced at the end of the integration. Now consider the following example:

(15) Neighbors:

You all know how difficult it is for all of us to get together ... because the cause of all our trouble and misery, the cat, is forever on the lookout for us. We won't get any peace of mind until we are rid of her. .... So I have thought of a plan: when the cat is fast asleep, one of our brave young mice shall climb on

her back and tie a bell round her neck. I now call on you, brave young mice: who will volunteer? Once this heroic deed is done, we shall all be secure and have peace of mind. ... All those who are ready and willing to bell the cat, please put up a paw. What! Not one? (Zhu, 1991)

Example (15) is taken from a fable, in which personification is used from beginning to end. The mice are personified and attributed such human actions as “know”, “get together”, “think of”, “climb”, “tie”, “call on”, “do”, “volunteer” and “bell”. In that way, mice act and make speeches like human beings. The fable becomes vivid for the employment of personification.

In the meaning construction of the personification in (15), double-scope networks have to be established. In the networks, in input 1 is the frame of a group of mice at a gathering. Elements in input 1 may include: one of the mice is actively making a lot of noise, but none responds. And in input 2 is the frame of a group of people at a meeting. Elements in input 2 may include: one of them is speaking to the rest about a very urgent situation and proposes a dangerous plan, but none dares to go and carry it out. The corresponding elements of the two input spaces bear partial mapping relationship and a new relation of each space that did not exist before is produced. Some elements of the two input spaces are projected to the generic space, thus the elements and the abstract structure in the generic space are produced. Elements in the generic space include noise, speech and so on. The abstract structure in the generic space is: mice’s noise and human speech resemble to each other in some way. Some elements in input spaces and the generic space are also projected into the blended space, thus the first step of conceptual integration, composition, is completed. Meanwhile, frames of both input spaces activate the basic knowledge: action speaks louder than words. Partial projection of elements and structures in both input spaces and the generic space as well as basic knowledge brings completion of conceptual integration to an end. In elaboration of conceptual integration, some elements are integrated in the blended space, but some are not. In the process, a new or emergent structure comes into being in the blended space: It is easy to say things but hard to do them, thus the meaning construction of the personification in (15) has come to an end.

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## CONCLUSION

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Personification is one of the most important parts of Chinese and western cultures. It has attracted the attention of scholars both at home and abroad. In western culture, personification has much to do with allegory and metaphor, but this article takes personification as a kind of linguistic form that embodies meaning. Meaning is conceptual and meaning construction of language is a very complex process. This article mainly focuses on personification, its definition, classification, linguistic

realization forms and most importantly probes into meaning construction of personification in discourse from the perspective of conceptual integration theory. It provides relatively detailed analyses of meaning construction of different personifications in discourse by making use of different conceptual integration network models. Obviously, conceptual integration theory has very powerful explanatory forces for the meaning construction of personifications in discourse. In the process of meaning construction of personifications in discourse, different mental spaces, cross-space mappings, partial selection and projection, compression, different structures and other factors are involved, but they have different features in different models. The detailed analyses reveal how meaning construction of different personifications in discourse occurs and how people understand personifications in discourse within the framework of conceptual integration theory.

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