

The Cognitive Metaphorical Expressions of *King Lear*

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Abstract

From a linguistic cognitive perspective, Shakespeare highlights the theme of *King Lear* through metaphorical expressions. One of the main clues to the play was the reckless and irrational act that King Lear and Gloucester had to deal with some of their own problems. These behaviors cause their personal and family tragedies. The author analyzes the tragic favour of *King Lear* from three aspects: The cognitive metaphorical expressions of language, tragic theme and the eyes. The drama *King Lear* shows the metaphorical expression of language cognition in the modeling of characters, the theme expression and the plot construction. From a linguistic point of view, Shakespeare highlights the internal structure and theme of drama by setting reckless and irrational actions of characters, and metaphorically expresses the grave consequence of recklessness and irrationality by this way of setting.

Keywords

King Lear, Language Cognition, Tragedy, Metaphorical Expressions of Language, Tragic Theme and the Eyes

1. Introduction

King Lear is a representative of Shakespeare's tragedies, which is still being pursued by the world so far, and the interpretation of the play even more varied. One of the reasons why the author thinks the play can last forever is that the play's language cognition and metaphorical expressions. In this paper, the author illustrates Shakespeare's unique tragic destiny design by analyzing the metaphorical expressions of language, the tragic theme and the main characters' eyes in *King Lear* from a linguistic cognitive perspective.

2. The Cognitive Metaphorical Expressions of Language

The drama *King Lear* shows the metaphorical expression of language cognition

in the modeling of characters, the theme expression and the plot construction. One of the ways in which the author expresses his metaphorical expression is that Lear's lack of reasonable judgment and reckless behavior toward the essence of things (Wang, 2012). The metaphorical expression in terms of the main thrust of the play, the process of narration and the dynamic construction of the character images is manifested in the unrealistic cognitive and blind behavior of King Lear, and in the image construction and plot development of the Earl of Gloucester.

In the play, King Lear promised to give his country to three daughters, but his demand was that the three daughters must express their respect and love for the king and his father in the most beautiful and pleasant language in the world. King Lear is the leader of a country, so the language standard set by his daughter is essentially the embodiment of flattery and preservation of feudal monarchy. In terms of the language standard that King Lear gave his daughters, it is false and unrealistic. It is a beautiful illusion constructed by Shakespeare and shows a strong irrationality. In addition, King Lear set the language standard for daughters, which in itself embodied the power politics, so it embodied the arbitrary character. Language is the most basic medium for people to communicate, which is not ideological and unconscious. However, language and rights can lead to qualitative changes in language. For example, in order to achieve certain goals, the speech may be submissive to rights, but in its content may be full of flattery; in order to demonstrate justice and fairness, the language will be ruthlessly contempt and combat rights. In general, to see whether a person is sincere or not does not attach importance to whether the person has a pleasant voice, but depends on his actual actions, but King Lear's judgment on loyalty issues only set the standard of a beautiful language, without the actual comparison and observation.

King Lear's criterion of loyalty and filial piety in a verbal form is very undesirable, which also reflects the irrational and arbitrary character traits of King Lear on the one hand, and the language standard is also easily used by others, which contains a lot of deceit (Wang, 2016). When King Lear in accordance with the established language standard for his eldest daughter to say his love and loyalty, the eldest daughter Gonerrey firmly said: "My dear father, my love for you can not be expressed in words, I love You surpass freedom, your eyes, your honor, your beauty, your wealth, your health, your life, and anything measurable in the world." The answer of the eldest daughter made King Lear very happy and satisfied, and she also reached the level set by her father. However, when Lear's eldest daughter complied with this standard to gain the favor of her father and acquired her rights, land and wealth, she inadvertently denied this standard because the standard set by King Lear regarded beautiful rhetoric as valuable as right, wealth, land, while the eldest daughter in the completion of this standard regarded honor, beauty, wealth and other material conditions as references. Gonerrey became a flattering and snobbish person for her flattering the truth for

the sake of profit, and her hypocritical and pleasant words became the best tool to protect her from being “glamorous.”

Cordelia, the youngest daughter of King Lear, is obviously different from her two sisters, and she is reluctant to obtain certain benefits through the hypocritical pretense of meeting the rights, for that is to her equivocating the inner sincerity and reason as well as being contrary to her own conscience. King Lear very disgusted at Cordelia’s behavior, so he brutally robbed all of Cordelia’s rights, and even the right of Cordelia being his daughter. The development of the story here, the relationship between rights and discourse has been obvious: there will be two situations when the discourse is willing to submit to rights, one is discourse is forced to bow to rights and silence to deal with the situation, the other is the discourse is mercilessly abandoned by rights. When King Lear asked Cordelia the same question, Cordelia was unwilling to surrender to rights, so she said to King Lear: “Father, I can not tell.” That makes King Lear, who primarily loved his little daughter very much, became extremely angry, he could not believe his daughter’s answer, so again asked the little daughter, “Are you saying is true ?,” “Really, my father,” Cordelia replied. This made King Lear more angry, he felt his daughter is completely unfaithful and ungrateful, so he said to his little daughter, “You are so young, so unfaithful.” Cordelia replied helplessly, “Although I am still young, but my heart is loyal.” This reply caused King Lear has completely lost his mind, roaring to his daughter and said: “Put Your loyalty as your dowry.” Cordelia did not like her sisters as hypocrites to express the love of his father, for her love for her father is unable to use words to measure, but Cordelia suffered a severe punishment, which the metaphorical expression of cognitive language casts a heavy sadistic color on the work. Cordelia’s unmotivated language shows her simplicity and kindness, but this quality is not seen and acknowledged by others, even including her own father. When people’s discourse does not want to surrender to rights, reckless and irrational judgments will abandon all the good qualities ruthlessly, and morality is lost.

The essence of the standard of speech set by King Lear is an illusion, which is maintained by political power and has great irrational and blind footality, or can be said that such a standard can not be used to measure the real existence of justice and truth. If the beauty of speech must be treated as the truth, as King Lear does, then this truth can only be based on illusion and unrealism. The illusion that King Lear mistook for nothingness is true, leading him to regard hypocrisy as truth and truth as lies, leading him to abandon the truth to the irrational side.

King Lear’s irrational approach not only plunged himself into a road of no return, but also caused Cordelia to plunge into the whirlpool of tragedies (Liu, 2013). Cordelia, who was alone, went to France and heard that her two elder sisters did not continue to show filial piety as they did to their father in Palace, but evacuated King Lear on a stormy evening, let King Lear endure the cold and hunger in the wilderness. This heinous news made Cordelia’s heart completely collapsed, she also felt into the abyss of tragedy. The pleasant words and the

painful reality interweave and deepen the metaphorical expression of language cognition.

3. Cognitive Metaphorical Expression of the Tragic Theme

The cognitive metaphorical expression of *King Lear* is also reflected in the tragic fate of the characters in the play. The Earl of Gloucester was deceived by the words of his younger son, Edmond, causing him to drive his eldest son, Edgar, brutally out of his house, and Edgar had to play the fool to avoid the Knights' chase. From this point of view, Gloucester is unfortunate, he was mercilessly deceived by his youngest son, but hurt his other son. But the real tragedy is more than that, the younger son, Edmund, later falsely accused Gloucester of being an inmate with the enemy, causing him to be poisoned by Reagan and her husband, causing blindness to both eyes and ending up alone in the wilderness for the rest of his life. Gloucester's recklessness and irrationality harmed himself. His lack of proper judgment of things led to the tragedy. After blindness, he not only became a rational blind person, but also a blind person in the real sense (Chang, 2014).

From the play's description of Gonerrey and Reagan competing for Edmond's love, the performance of metaphor aside from their blind, irrational view of love. The two sisters in order to fight for love but put aside their affections and reason aside, Gonerrey killed her sister with poison, and then chose to commit suicide after she was abandoned by Edmond. The sisters were both blindfolded by blind, rather irrational love. From Edmund's point of view, he seduced both sisters to the point of hurting his father, and both Reagan and Gonerrey saw only the appearance rather than the essence of the real thing.

In addition, Shakespeare arranged the plot of Cordelia's irrational and reckless behavior in the drama. Cordelia launched a foreign war hastily in order to save her father. This behavior includes not only the problem of family, but also the problem between countries. Cordelia seems to be a kind of filial piety and affection for her father to launch a war, but such a war against another country without undue diplomatic tactics is undoubtedly an act of aggression. From this level, Cordelia's so-called filial piety and affection are untenable, even though she was once a member of the Lear nation. Cordelia's irrational and reckless behavior also lost her life during the war and ended her tragic life.

To sum up, Shakespeare's tragic destiny design not only implies to readers the serious consequences of irrationality and recklessness, but also reveals the inherent meaning of tragedy for us (Xiao, 2013).

4. Cognitive Metaphorical Expression of the Eyes

Shakespeare's *King Lear* applied the metaphorical expression of the eyes on several occasions. If these are divided, the readers will find that Shakespeare implies, in four respects, some relations between the eye and the things, such as the relationship between the eyes and people's cognition, the relationship between

the eyes and the flattery and hypocrisy, the relationship between the eyes and the actual, and the relationship between the eyes and characteristics (Xiang, 2016).

Cordelia sees the eyes of her two sisters as “a jewel in the eyes of her father,” and “a pair of flattering, hypocritical eyes.” This depiction highlights the image of hypocrisy and camouflage in Gonerrey and Reagan.

King Lear only came to an external form of things, but he could not really see the inside of things. King Lear, who was expelled by his eldest daughter and his second daughter, realized his “old eyes and doldrums”, which also satirized the reckless personality of Lear in a certain extent.

When Cordelia knew her father’s experience, she left like “crystal” and “angels tears of holy water”, which reflected Cordelia’s kindness and purity from the side.

At the end of the play, King Lear saw that Gloucester’s wounded eyes were bleeding, then said: “Your eyelids are hanging down, and you are divided, but you can see men’s feelings are changeable. “ Shakespeare implicitly expresses such a truth through King Lear’s words, perhaps knowing that people can truly understand what is real and what is illusory only after they have experienced it (Chen, & Xie, 2013).

5. Conclusion

From a linguistic point of view, Shakespeare highlights the internal structure and theme of drama by setting reckless and irrational actions of characters, and metaphorically expresses the grave consequence of recklessness and irrationality by this way of setting, which is not the consequence arranged by God in advance, but due to the innate weakness and nature of mankind (Chen, 2017). King Lear can not tell the difference between right and wrong. King Lear set the language standard for daughters, which in itself embodied the power politics, so it embodied the arbitrary character. King Lear, who was expelled by his eldest daughter and his second daughter, realized his “old eyes and doldrums”, which also satirized the reckless personality of Lear in a certain extent. Arbitrarily acting not only plunges himself into the abyss of tragedies, but also causes irreparable tragedies to his relatives, nations and people. The tragedies include the separation of kinship, the fragmentation of the family, the demise of the country, and the replacement of the dynasty (He, 2017). To a certain extent, these tragedies are an irreversible destruction. And the hidden metaphorical significance lies behind this destruction.

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