

Chapter 9

Chinese Metaphorical Expressions in Talking About the End-of-Life Journey



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Abstract Aging, illness, and death are inevitable stages of life that are prominently conceptualized in every culture and language. Considered as taboo topics, they are often euphemized through metaphor. Therefore, it is necessary for language learners and medical practitioners to understand the nature of metaphoric euphemisms and their implicated meanings since talking about them is unavoidable. This chapter investigates the Chinese metaphoric euphemisms related to aging, illness, and death. The LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is elaborated with Chinese examples to illustrate the formation of metaphoric expressions. In light of the findings, this chapter outlines pedagogical implications for the teaching of Chinese during medical and nursing training or for use in the training of already qualified medical professionals for effective patient–physician/nurse communication.

9.1 Introduction

It is normally assumed that communication between people in poor health and medical professionals is a necessary element in the doctor–patient relationship. Effective doctor–patient communication is at the heart of the art of medicine and can lead the delivery of high-quality health care (Ha and Longnecker 2010). Research finds that most complaints about medical and nursing experiences are related to issues of communication, not clinical competency (Tongue et al. 2005; Clack et al. 2004; Semino et al. 2018). Other researches also indicate that the element of trust embodied in the patient–physician relationship, which is built upon effective communication, can significantly impact on patients’ willingness to seek

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medical services (Lin et al. 2016). Thus, it is necessary for medical practitioners and nursing personnel to familiarize themselves with the art of communication.

However, patient–physician communication can be very different from daily conversation. Topics related to ill health, including aging, sickness, dying, and death, are considered unpleasant in many cultures; many people find themselves embarrassed, uncomfortable, and even depressed when talking about these topics. One reason for the ‘untellable’ nature of these topics is that the content may be ‘too personal, too embarrassing or obscene’ (Norrick 2005: 323) and thus exceed the maximum threshold for the sharing of experience in an open way in most contexts. For instance, the topic of death is generally avoided in conversation due to the ‘potential transgression of taboos’ (ibid: 328). Demken et al. (2016) are in line with this viewpoint, noting that conversation about the topic of dying remains highly individual, subjective, and elusive, thus leading to difficulty in overt discussion. In addition to concerns about individual privacy and topic sensitivity, the process of aging, becoming ill, and dying is often associated not only with physical discomfort, but also with uneasy emotions like anxiety, fear, and the feeling of isolation. The experiences of death are fraught with complications, and the related feelings are too abstract from everyday experience to be verbalized in a literal way. That is to say, when it comes to conversation about aging, illness, dying, and death, people may find it difficult to express themselves properly and clearly, and medical practitioners and nursing personnel may be confused about what the patients really feel and experience.

Metaphorical expressions that are euphemistic are commonly adopted for talking about taboo topics so as to conceptualize the associate intangible ideas (Kövecses 2000) and, accordingly, to facilitate the conveyance of thought on these unpleasant topics. Metaphor is recognized as a powerful device, linguistically and socially, which reflects conventional and implicit ways of thinking, and bridges communication gaps between speakers (Kövecses 2000). Metaphor is defined by cognitive linguists as a conceptual mechanism that allows for a mapping of thoughts across different conceptual domains. The experience that we may wish to talk about—the topic or target domain—is more abstract and less mutually accessible between speakers and listeners, while the other experience that we may have had—the vehicle or source domain—is more concrete and intersubjectively accessible (Dancygier and Sweetser 2014; Lakoff and Johnson 1980). The feature of mapping conceptually allows people to talk about taboo topics, like death, in a euphemistic way.

As euphemism is adopted to prevent the expression of inappropriate topics and so to facilitate communication, the ability to incorporate metaphorically euphemistic expressions in an acceptable manner is deemed as a demonstration of communicative competence. Thus, being able to communicate effectively and appropriately in different situations and for different purposes and at the same time to be able to grasp properly cultural practices for interpersonal communication are considered essential global competencies for language learners, a viewpoint confirmed by the two most popular and world-recognized references for foreign

language proficiency—the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency guidelines. That is to say, the ability to understand and use euphemistic expressions is not only critical for medical professionals, but also for language learners in general.

This chapter investigates Chinese euphemistic expressions related to aging, illness, and death, and analyzes the metaphorical nature of the expressions. In light of the findings, this chapter then proposes some pedagogical implications for raising the awareness of and improving the comprehension of the use of metaphorical euphemism in Chinese for foreign language learners of Chinese. The study also highlights the implications for the teaching of Chinese for medical and/or nursing purposes, such as in long-term nursing education, and for the training of medical professionals, including medical practitioners and nursing personnel, in effective communication skills.

9.2 Background

This section will briefly summarize studies of Chinese for specific purposes (CSP) so as to lay the groundwork for the goals of the chapter. Then, the background and conventions of the topics of death and dying are introduced first to develop a comprehensive understanding of the nature of these taboos. Then, the definition of metaphor, the ways in which metaphors are formed, and their functions are reviewed to establish a theoretical background. Finally, relations and reasons of how metaphors contribute to communicative exchanges about the common understanding of health matters in Chinese are proposed.

9.2.1 *Studies on Chinese for Specific Purposes*

Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) courses, according to Trace et al. (2015: 6), are ‘those in which the methodology, the content, the objectives, the materials, the teaching, and the assessment practices all stem from specific, target language uses based on an identified set of specialized needs.’ Courses such as Spanish for Tourism, Business for Chinese, or Japanese for Nursing can illustrate. However, as pointed out by Trace et al. (ibid), given the growth of English as a global language, most of the research regarding LSP has focused on English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Nevertheless, LSP should integrate both language and content area knowledge that is specific to a particular local context. To this end, several proposals are provided by Trace et al. (ibid) on non-English LSP curriculum design. Seven of the chapters are devoted to CSP, with six related to business and one to the needs of students of nursing.

Compared to work done on ESP, that done on CSP is indeed much scantier, although work on some areas of CSP is gradually developing. For instance, Wang et al. (2015) built a Web Business-Chinese Corpus (WBCC) to assist learners of Chinese in studying business collocations used in Chinese. Chen and Lee (2012), noticing the diversified nature of the cultural content in the current teaching materials in business Chinese, developed indicators for use in probing the cultural content of the materials so as to provide foundations for more in-depth research. A recent collection of work on CSP is found in an edition edited by Peng (2016), in which eight topics of CSP, including business, journalism, traditional Chinese medicine, tourism, technology, law, Christianity, and tour guide practice, are presented in terms of the current status quo of the topic, the specific terms used, their definitions and related studies, vocabulary, teaching materials, activities, and curriculum designs.

9.2.2 *Chinese for Medical and/or Nursing Purposes*

The areas of CSP for medical and/or nursing Chinese are relatively underexplored, although some situational conversations in hospitals or between doctors and patients have been designed (e.g., Tsai 2017). In particular, as the number of aging and aged people is growing, the capacity to carry out long-term nursing is of paramount importance to society. It is impossible for family or other persons concerned for health care and nursing professionals to avoid mentioning unpleasant topics such as death. Since topics related to death are often culturally sensitive, learning the culture and the language at the same time is crucial for CSP. Learners of Chinese need to be aware of language use in context as well as sociocultural situations for culturally appropriate communication.

To illustrate, this chapter conducted an informal corpus research: a small-scale investigation of two news events happening in the same period (from June to September 2018). The two news events were both about dying and/or death of celebrities: the former sports commentator Fu Da-ren, and the political commentator Yang Wei-zhong. Corpus data were collected from five major online newspapers in Taiwan, including Chinatimes News (CTnews), TVBS-News, Central News Agency (CNA), Apple Daily, and Liberty Times Net (LTN), as well as from two news media, including SET News (SETN) and ET Today News (ETtoday). In total, 17,683 Chinese characters were collected for the analysis. Among those characters, twenty-four different Chinese expressions about death/dying were identified. The expressions are listed in Table 9.1: (Note that the table reports types rather than token numbers of expressions; i.e., similar combinations of uses, regardless of exact wording, were counted as one type of expression rather than several tokens.).

The concept of dying/death can be expressed by a noun (e.g., 亡 *wáng* ‘death’) or a verb (e.g., 結束 *jiéshù* ‘to terminate’) or by combinations such as adjective and noun (e.g., 善終 *shànzhōng* ‘good ending’) or an adverb and verb (e.g., 安息 *ānxī* ‘peacefully rest’).

Table 9.1 Expressions about death of Fu Da-ren and Yang Wei-zhong collected from Chinese news media

Expressions about death and/or dying	Number of occurrences
安樂死 <i>ānlèsǐ</i> 'euthanasia'/ 陪伴性自殺 <i>péibànxìng-zìshā</i> 'accompanied suicide'	14
溺斃 <i>nìbèi</i> 'drown'	14
享壽 <i>xiǎngshòu</i> 'to enjoy a lifetime (of ...years)'/ 享年 <i>xiǎngnián</i> 'to live to the age of...'	7
得以 <i>déyǐ</i> 'can'/尋求 <i>xúnqiú</i> 'seek'/ 安樂善終 <i>ānlèshànzhōng</i> 'rest in peace'	6
尊嚴結束一生 <i>zūnyán-jiéshù-yīshēng</i> 'end one's life with dignity'/ 結束生命 <i>jiéshù-shēngmìng</i> 'end one's life'	5
我要走了 <i>wǒ-yào-zǒu-le</i> 'I'm leaving'	5
最後一站 (程) <i>zuìhòu-yīzhàn(chéng)</i> 'the last station (mile)'/ 人生終站 <i>rénshēng-zhōngzhàn</i> 'the last station of life'	5
犧牲生命 <i>xīshēng-shēngmìng</i> 'sacrifice one's life'	5
喪生 <i>sàngshēng</i> 'perish'/ 意外喪生 <i>yìwài-sàngshēng</i> 'accidental death'	4
安息主懷 <i>ānxí-zhǔhuái</i> 'rest in peace in the arms of God'	3
死得其所 <i>sǐdéqísuǒ</i> 'die a worthy death'	3
辭世 <i>císhì</i> 'pass on'	3
爲國捐軀 <i>wèiguójuānqū</i> 'die for one's country'	3
沒了心跳 <i>méi-le-xīntiào</i> 'no heartbeat'/ 停止心跳 <i>tíngzhǐ-xīntiào</i> 'heart stops beating'	2
離世 <i>líshì</i> 'leave the world'/ 離開這個世界 <i>líkāi-zhège-shìjiè</i> 'leave the world'	2
邁向生命終點 <i>màixiàng-shēngmìng-zhōngdiǎn</i> 'approach the end of life'	2
過世 <i>guòshì</i> 'pass away'	2
人生最後旅程 <i>rénshēng-zuìhòu-lǚchéng</i> 'the last journey of life'	2
一路好走 <i>yìlùhǎozǒu</i> 'have a good journey'	2
臨終離別 <i>línzhōng-líbié</i> 'parting'	1
仗已打完 <i>zhàng-yǐ-dǎ-wán</i> 'finish fighting'	1
身亡 <i>shēnwáng</i> 'die'	1
驟逝 <i>zòushì</i> 'pass away suddenly'	1
魂斷異鄉 <i>húnduàn-yìxiāng</i> 'die in foreign land'	1
Total	94

Moreover, the expressions can be in one character, two characters, or even longer phrases. No matter the differences in the linguistic forms, the meaning about death/dying was frequently expressed in indirect ways. For instance, the expressions, 享壽 *xiǎngshòu* 'to enjoy a lifetime (of ...years)' and 享年 *xiǎngnián* 'to live to the age of...', are used to disguise the sadness of losing the person under discussion by reporting numbers of the years of his life. In addition, expressions

like 最後一站 (程) *zuìhòu-yīzhàn(chéng)* ‘the last station (mile)’ or 人生終站 *rénshēng-zhōngzhàn* ‘the last station of life,’ 邁向生命終點 *màixiàng-shēngmìng-zhōngdiǎn* ‘approach the end of life,’ and 人生最後旅程 *rénshēng-zuìhòu-lǚchéng* ‘the last journey of life’ apply the concept of journey and metaphorize human life as a journey, and thus the end of life is like the end of the journey.

The preliminary findings of this small-scale investigation of Chinese expressions of death/dying from two news events about the death of celebrities are still able to demonstrate some valuable insights even though the process of analysis was not done under the strict control of a coding and calculation procedure. First, the use of euphemistic expressions when discussing sensitive topics like ill health or death is common. Secondly, such euphemistic expressions are often created based on the metaphoric nature of language, such as metaphorizing a life as a journey. Thirdly, the expressions used may highlight positive perspectives on living rather than negative perspectives on dying so as to mitigate the emotional impact.

The use of different expressions to give positive or negative appraisals highlights the cultural values embodied in the Chinese language and reinforces the necessity of explicitly teaching metaphoric expressions which function as euphemisms. Consider the following two headlines in the news collected for the corpus:

- (1) 永別了!傳達任用餘生爭取善終權 (CTnews 2018/06/07)
Yǒngbié-le-Fúdàrèn-yòng-yúshēng-zhēngqǔ-shànzhōng-quán
 Goodbye forever-LE-Fudaren-use-fight for-good death-right
 ‘Goodbye forever! Mr. Fu Da-ren used the rest of his life to fight for his right to a good death’.
- (2) 楊偉中「死得其所」? 葉毓蘭的這句成語引發論戰 (SETN 2018/08/31)
Yangwěizhōng-sǐdéqísuǒ Yèyùlán-de-zhè-jù-chéngyǔ-yǐnfā-lùnzhàn
 Yangweizhong-die-get-the-path-Yeyulan-NOM-this-CL-idiom-cause-controversy
 ‘It’s a worthy death for Mr. Yang Wei-zhong? This comment of Mr. Ye Yu-lan has caused controversy.’

The fact that both persons died is undoubted. However, different Chinese expressions are employed to describe their deaths due to the different causes of death. Mr. Fu was a famous sports reporter and commentator, and he died by asking for the operation of euthanasia in Switzerland. Expressions of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor such as 永別 *yǒng-bié* ‘so long forever’ are found extensively in news reports. In addition, because he was 85 years old and had suffered from long-term illness, his death was ‘fought for’ and was interpreted as a good death (善終 *shàn-zhōng* ‘good end’). On the other hand, Mr. Yang, a Taiwan government official and a political commentator, drowned while attempting to save his daughter in a rafting incident. His death was totally unexpected as he was only 47 years old and in good health at the time. Expressions such as 意外喪生 *yìwài-sāngshēng* ‘accidental death’ were widely used to report his death in the news. The expression 死得其所 *sǐ-dé-qí-suǒ* ‘a worthy death,’ which often carries a positive connotation to praise people who die in a way which is considered to have shown benefit to

society in some way, was criticized as inappropriate to use in this case. While both of these expressions can be employed for describing death, subtle differences exist in their use.

The understanding of language use in the context is indeed important for learners of Chinese. The successful selection of culturally appropriate language content and use depends on a proper understanding of what can be said to whom, how to say it, and in what circumstances. This part of knowledge is lacking in the field and still needs to be developed for a more comprehensive long-term nursing education. As shown by the two news headlines, metaphorical expressions based on LIFE IS A JOURNEY are much more appropriate for raising issues related to death since death is still considered to be an unpleasant topic to talk about.

9.2.3 Perception of the End-of-Life Journey

Aging, illness, and death are signposts that no one can miss in the journey of life. The possible pain and distress associated with such biological phenomena commonly lead to an unwillingness to discuss such topics among people of various cultures. For centuries, aging, illness, and death have been regarded as taboo topics. In the USA, for example, though topics about death, dying, and the dead can be commonly found in popular culture, such as on TV programs, in movies, or in music, such topics are often associated with feelings of fear and the occurrence of violent actions (Leming and Dickinson 2002; Durkin 2003). For the British, talking about death and dying in public are commonly regarded as improper social acts; in a survey conducted on behalf of The National Council for Palliative Care (ComRes 2016), about two-thirds of British adults agreed that dying is one of the topics that the British people feel least comfortable discussing with others, with only sex receiving a lower score on the scale of uncomfortableness.

The open discussion of topics about the end of life is socially and consciously rejected by convention not only in Western countries, but in Eastern ones as well. A reluctance to talk about death was also found in a survey of a total of 923 physicians in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan: 50% of the Japanese physicians, 59% of those in Korea, and 70% of those in Taiwan reported that they often or very often experienced a situation where families were reluctant to discuss end-of-life issues (Cheng et al. 2015). Another example of how people's perception of death influences their behaviors can be illustrated through the practice, whereby Chinese people avoid giving a clock to others as a gift. The pronunciation of such behavior 送鐘 *sòng-zhōng* 'give a clock as a present' in Chinese sounds the same as 送終 *sòng-zhōng* 'attend the funeral,' which implies death. The giving of a clock would be considered improper and unwelcome because hearing the sound of this homonymous lexical item can trigger an association with death.

Generally speaking, since preserving and prolonging the length of one's life are often valued, the termination of life is treated as a taboo in various cultures (cf. Xu 2007). Likewise, it is often equally offensive to discuss events such as aging and

becoming ill that lead toward death. A number of reasons for such negative attitudes have been identified and commonly agreed upon (Dying Matters Coalition 2018):

1. Concern about embarrassment, such as saying the wrong thing and making matters worse, and feeling guilty about what has happened in the past
2. Concern about privacy, particularly in hospital wards
3. Reluctance to face the truth with the self-delusion that everything is alright
4. Respect for authority, i.e., the notion that professionals know best so no matters of concern are addressed.

The social taboo against direct talk about topics related to death and dying is also evident in various linguistic manifestations. When referring to aging, becoming ill, death, and dying, it is normative to use euphemisms, such as passed away or expired. A survey conducted by the Dying Matters Coalition (2011) shows that four out of five British people consider it appropriate to use euphemisms when talking about the death of someone they know; their survey also reveals that the commonly used euphemisms are often metaphorical, such as kicked the bucket, popped their clogs, and brown bread. It is agreed that linguistic taboos not only reinforce social norms, but also place boundaries on our perceptions, conceptions, and reactions to the world in which people function (Black 2016). Such manipulation of people's cognition is realized by adopting the metaphorical nature of language for the purpose of euphemism. An understanding of how metaphor and metaphorical euphemism work is necessary for communication and for acculturation.

9.3 Metaphor and Its Euphemistic Nature

9.3.1 *Definition of Metaphor*

Traditionally, metaphor was viewed as being based on the notions of similarity or comparison between literal and figurative meanings of an expression. The ancient Greek philosophers argued that metaphor is an implicit comparison based on the principles of analogy, such as Socrates' analogies of death: Death is either a dreamless sleep or migration to a place.

Now being dead is either of two things. ... And if in fact there is no perception, but it is like a sleep in which the sleeper has no dream at all, death would be a wondrous gain. ... On the other hand, if death is like a journey from here to another place, and if the things that are said are true, that in fact all the dead are there, then what greater good could there be than this, judges? (Plato, *Apology*, 40c–41a, translated by Thomas G. West, 1979)

As stated in the above-quoted paragraph, Socrates' comparison of death to a dreamless sleep or to migration is based on the similar characteristics that the three concepts possess. Based on this comparison, Black (1977) moves further to propose an interactive view of metaphor, taking it as one subject which projects its associated implications onto the distinct other; the two subjects interact with each other through the selection of related properties and the construction of parallel implications.

Black's interactive view of metaphors states the concept that metaphor is more than a manner of language use, but also a way of thinking about things. His idea of relating two subjects, or two domains, has been developed into the contemporary metaphor theory (CMT), which postulates that metaphor is a mapping between two conceptual domains in the conceptual system (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1993). People, based on their embodied experience, explain and reason the source domain by associating features to another domain. For instance, the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY implies that life is a progress through which one keeps moving onward in order to reach certain goals, just as a journey is a process of moving forward to reach each subsequent destination; therefore, the fact that life will reach its end is envisioned in the same way as a journey on which the destination has been reached. The Chinese usage 善終 *shàn-zhōng* 'good end' is one linguistic realization of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor.

In sum, metaphor is the conceptual mechanism through which we comprehend abstract concepts and perform abstract reasoning. Metaphor allows people to understand a relatively abstract subject matter in terms of a more concrete subject matter in a structured way. The perceived similarity between two subjects or two concepts among the participants in a conversation is the key to facilitate communication.

9.3.2 *Functions of Metaphor*

Metaphor is known as having several communicative functions: Metaphor can express matters that are otherwise inexpressible, it is a tool for evaluation, it can be used to persuade, and it can play a role in interpreting cultural entailments.

As for the inexpressibility of metaphor, Ortony (1975) claims that words cannot describe every aspect of experience and that metaphors can be used to bridge that gap. He points out that the communicative functions of figurative language are inexpressibility, compactness, and vividness: People can verbalize what is unknown or difficult to express by using metaphor, and can deliver compact and abundant information about the object in a limited amount of words. In a similar vein, Searle (1979) deems metaphor as an indirect speech act, suggesting that metaphorical meaning is used when the use of literal meanings cannot be relied upon. Littlemore and Low (2006) discuss the importance of metaphors and argue that competence in the use of metaphors has a great influence on second language learners' development of communicative competence. Figurative language is an indispensable tool in communication for both native and second language speakers.

The evaluative and persuasive potential of metaphor is related to its ability to frame topics in particular ways, highlighting some aspects and backgrounding others (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Musolff (2006: 27) uses the term 'scenario' to depict 'any kind of coherent segment of human beliefs, actions, experiences or imaginings that can be associated with an underlying conceptual 'frame', while Lakoff and Johnson (1980) name it 'image schema.' Both of these two terms emphasize the invariable properties and typical structure of the concepts involved in

metaphor. The selection of a source domain can be seen as involving the framing of a topic which includes the highlighting of certain aspects and the backgrounding of others (Semino et al. 2017). The deliberate selection of a source domain and certain metaphorical scenarios reflects the experience of particular groups of language users. In other words, by using metaphor people can deliver a positive or negative connotation of a subject matter, and can empower the process of communication.

In addition to fulfilling the purpose of communication, the understanding of the operation of metaphor is also believed to be able to disclose cultural insights and to enable the interpretation of ideology. Metaphor is formed not only on the basis of a language user's embodied experiences of living (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), but also from the ideology produced or nurtured in the historical and cultural context (Goatly 2007). In other words, metaphor themes are created not only through the universal body, but also through cultural experience; conversely, metaphor themes also construct the thinking and social behavior of language users. Being unfamiliar with the metaphors of a language can keep language users in the dark as to certain aspects of a situation, and they will lack a full understanding of the target culture. Conversely, the study of metaphor can disclose cultural entailments and also the ideological constituents of a culture.

To sum up, metaphor is a distinctive linguistic behavior in its communicative functions. Metaphor can deliver vivid images of things that are difficult or impossible to express, and the use of metaphor allows one to infer the values and judgements of the user of a language. An understanding of how to use metaphor can be a valuable tool to access elusive ideas or to enable communication on topics which cannot be spoken directly about. The cultural entailments of metaphor can provide insights into the unspoken ideology of a language user's community. Therefore, metaphor is a suitable linguistic device to use to talk about taboo topics like death and dying.

9.4 Life as Isomorphic as Journey

Life goes on just as time goes on. Such a universal is prominently conceptualized in every culture and is thoroughly pervasive in every language. As time goes on, events occur, and changes happen, transforming things into new and various shapes. Even if we cannot sense time itself, our visual systems allow us to detect events occurring in a sequence ordered by time. Since the concept of time is relatively more abstract to grasp, the understanding of time is hence often based on concrete embodied daily life experiences and/or common folk knowledge of the world. Thus, the use of linguistic expressions about journeys to characterize life is widespread. Understanding a metaphor of lifetime as an isomorphic experience of journeys demonstrates how ordinary language readily realizes the LIFE IS A JOURNEY concept in an extensive and systematic way. A conceptualization of life as a journey gives rise to all of the ontological correspondences and inferential patterns that are present in our common knowledge. All of the entities in the domain of life correspond systematically to the entities in the domain of journey—the travelers, their goals, the states and changes, their difficulties, and destinations.

In discussing how abstract inferences can be characterized as concrete spatial inferences, Lakoff (1993: 216) maintains that time can be understood through two special cases—location and object—of the time metaphor TIME PASSING IS MOTION, which belongs to a general system of event structure metaphor. While examples of English are used to show the differences between the two special cases, they converge as to why time is understood metaphorically in terms of motion, entities, and locations, because, as claimed by Lakoff (1993: 218): ‘it makes good biological sense that time should be understood in terms of things and motion.’ Yu (1998: 85) points out that ‘for ages and across cultures, the models in which the conceptualization of time is cast have all been spatial in nature.’ Understanding time as things and motions in space is indeed pervasively realized in Chinese. To illustrate, the example in (3) explicitly combines the two concepts together—life being a journey to be travelled and also being an object to be painted. The expressions used in (4) also manifest clearly that the paths of life are realized as the concrete paths, locations, or destinations of journeys. The process of life cannot be stopped, just as the process of time cannot be stopped; hence, facing the end of life is a part of a path which it is necessary to take; everybody is equal in having to undergo this process, and the necessity of going through the journey of life is unavoidable as shown by the expressions in (5).

- (3) 人生路這麼走 - 用創意的彩料,塗繪絢爛的人生
Rénshēng-lù-zhème-zǒu- yòng-chuàngyì-de-cǎiliào-túhuì-xuànlàn-de- rénshēng
 Life-road-how-walk-use-creativity-DE-paint-paint-dazzling-DE-life
 ‘This is how life goes: using creative paints, paint your dazzling life.’
- (4) 看清前程路、走好自己的路
Kànqīng-qiánchéng-lù-zǒuhǎo-zìjǐ-de-lù
 see-clearly-future-road-walk-well-self-DE-road
 ‘To think about your future carefully, to be aware of what you are doing’
 生命世界的道場、登高望遠之樂
Shēngmìng-shìjiè-de-dào-chǎng-dēnggāo-wàngyuǎn-zhī-lè
 Lifeworld-DE-field of rites-ascend-high-look-far-DE-happiness
 ‘The field of rites for life in the world, the happiness of being mature and sophisticated’.
- (5) 死亡是每個人必須走的一條最平等的路
Sǐwáng-shì-měi-gè-rén-bìxū-zǒu-de-yī-tiáo-zuì-píngděng-de-lù
 Death-be-everyone-must-walk-DE-one-CL-most-equal-DE-road
 ‘Death is the most equal road that must be taken by everyone.’
 死亡是不能逃避的奇幻之旅
Sǐwáng-shì-bùnéng-táobì-de-qíhuàn-zhī-lǚ
 death-be-cannot-escape-DE-fantastic-DE-trip
 ‘Death is a fantastic trip that cannot be avoided.’

The LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, which belongs to the hierarchy of the event structure metaphor, also consists of two systems based on locations and objects, respectively (cf. Lakoff 1993; Yu 1998). Generalizations on the use of the metaphor

can be made based on the observations made at both the linguistic and the inferential levels in Chinese. An abundance of surface realizations of this metaphor is found in use due to the ubiquitous and pervasive nature of the topic about which the metaphor is being employed. In particular, since events related to the end of life happen all the time as time passes, people have to talk about them. The examples to be discussed in this section show that Chinese metaphors that are employed to depict human end-of-life situations are found in various ways as shapes of journeys or courses of life that exhibit exactly the same process as the passage of human life. Linguistic metaphorical expressions are used to represent the lifelong topics of aging, becoming ill, and dying. For instance, as time goes along, people age, become ill, and die, just as plants grow, wither, and die. Such an example as in (6) illustrates a use of metaphor in portraying aged people as plants that are withering. Just as difficulties occur in a journey, impediments arise in life. Obscure diseases can hinder our motion as shown in (7). The examples in (8) and (9) indicate how our bodies need to be protected and how we must fight against diseases as they are considered as enemies that can attack and destroy our bodies.

- (6) 老人是枯黃的植物
Lǎorén-shì-kūhuáng-de-zhíwù
 Old-people-be-withered-DE-plants
 ‘Old people are withered plants.’
- (7) 被這怪病給阻礙了
Bèi-zhè-guàibìng-gěi-zǔài-le
 BEI-this-strange-illness-GEI-hinder-LE
 ‘Hindered by a mysterious illness’.
- (8) 免疫系統隨時為健康備戰出擊
Miǎnyì-xìtǒng-suíshí-wéi-jìankāng-bèizhàn-chūjī
 Immune-system-always-for-health- get armed-fight
 ‘The immune system is always armed and ready to fight for health.’
- (9) 沒有被病痛掠倒
Méiyǒu-bèi-bìngtòng-luědǎo
 Not-BEI-illness-defeat
 ‘Not defeated by illness’.

The systems of locations and objects also manifest when novel expressions are employed for depiction of aging and becoming ill. Inferential reasoning about views on aging or becoming ill follows as instances of inferential patterns occur. The states of aging and becoming ill are considered as locations. Example (10) illustrates aging as a deep and dark gulf that people can fall into, and the example in (11) illustrates that the old and ill bodies that people possess are like lonely boats with long-ago marks etched on them. The human body is understood as an object or machine that can lose its function and expire after time changes, as shown in (12)—an old body as an old worn-out car. Machines get rusty and lose function after being used for a certain amount of time, as illustrated in (13). Old bodies are like old cars. Once people get old and sick, their motion slows down, as illustrated in (14).

- (10) 終於墜入老年黑淵
Zhōngyú-zhuìrù-lǎonián-hēiyuān
 Finally-fall-into-old-age-black-hole
 ‘Finally falling into the deep black hole of old age’.
- (11) 身體是刻了舊痕的獨木舟
Shēntǐ-shì-kè-le-jiùhén-de-dúmùzhōu
 Body-be-carve-LE-old-mark-DE-canoe
 ‘The body is a canoe etched with old marks’.
- (12) 老化的生命是古董老爺車
Lǎohuà-de-shēngmìng-shì-gǔdǒng-lǎoyéché
 Old-DE-life-be-old-car
 ‘Old lives are old worn-out cars.’
- (13) 身體總有使用年限,用久了就鏽了鈍了
Shēntǐ-zǒngyǒu-shǐyòng-niánxiàn-yòng-jiǔ-le-jiù-xiù-le-dùn-le
 Body-certainly-have-use-year-limit-use-long-LE-JIU-rust-LE-blunt-LE
 ‘The body has a limited time of use; it becomes rusted and blunt after being used for a long time.’
- (14) 拖著病軀緩緩行至終點
Tuōzhe-bìngqū-huǎnhuǎn-xíng-zhì-zhōngdiǎn
 drag-ZHE-ailing-body-slowly-walk-to-destination
 ‘Dragging the ailing body and slowly advancing to the destination’.

The examples discussed so far have clearly shown how ordinary Chinese expressions—ranging from descriptions of various physical states of being to different kinds of journeys—are realized to metaphorically characterize end-of-life topics, including aging, becoming ill, and dying. The DEATH IS DEPARTURE metaphor has long been manifested crosslinguistically and cross-culturally. The following examples in (15) employing the system of locations demonstrate the concept of departure for death. When a person dies, he or she leaves the last station of the journey and says good-bye forever to people. When a person dies, he or she completes a performance or finishes a game, and takes a bow, leaving the stage forever.

- (15) 離開人世的最後月台
Líkāi-rénshì-de-zuìhòu-yuètái
 leave-human-world-DE-final-station-platform
 ‘Departing from the world’
 與世長辭
Yǔ-shì-zhǎngcí
 With- world-long-resign
 ‘Departing from the world for long’
 終曲謝幕
Zhōngqǔ-xièmù
 Finale-take a curtain call
 ‘Taking a curtain call from life’.

No one can avoid facing their end-of-life journey. The examples of Chinese usage discussed so far carry a certain negative evaluation of the topic. They manifest, on the one hand, the universality of the LIFE-IS-A-JOURNEY metaphor and, on the other hand, the specific cultural evaluation of this concept in Chinese. Since life is considered as so precious and valuable, the loss of life is reckoned as distressing. The value which people accord to having life makes them unwilling to face the end of life. End-of-life situations are often imagined as negative—topics not to be mentioned directly. The unwillingness to accept departure from life leads people to conjecture that leaving this journey implies continuing on another journey. Hence, the cycle of various kinds of journey goes again. All of the inferential patterns for reasoning recycle too. For instance, use of the cycle of day and night or of the four seasons to represent the cycle of life is commonly found in Chinese. The repetition of cycles of behavior or going on to another journey to gently represent the loss of life helps to tone down the sadness of having to face death. Consider the following examples. The first one in (16) explicitly indicates that it is time to start the next journey, referring to the journey after this lifetime. The cases in (17) directly refer to the locations after death—heaven, the Western Paradise or the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss or *Sukhavati*. In (18), the first example realizes the novel expression of buying a business class ticket to go to paradise, and the second example is a very common euphemistic expression for dying 往生 *wǎngsheng* ‘going to life,’ which explicitly represents death as an act preceding that of going on another life. All of these expressions manifest death as the departure of this life and the inception of the next journey. What is even more interesting about these examples is that they symbolically represent cultural perspectives. Not only is the leaving of this life transformed from a matter of sorrow to one of happiness, but leaving this life also means going happily on to another life—life in the pure land. The Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, a sacred religious land of beauty that surpasses all other realms, comes from Buddhism. In the Pure Land traditions, entering the Pure Land is equivalent to the attainment of enlightenment. The land is believed to be a place in which no aging, no sickness, and hence no pain should arise at all, and it is a place for rebirth if people so wish.

- (16) 啓程的時刻來臨
Qǐchéng-de-shíkè-láilín
 start off-DE-time-come
 ‘It is time to start on a new journey.’
- (17) 上天堂/上西天/去極樂世界
Shàng-tiāntáng/Shàng-xītiān/Qù-jílèshìjiè
 ascend-heaven/ascend-heaven/go-the Pure Land
 ‘Going to heaven/Going to heaven/Going to the Pure Land’.
- (18) 買一張登仙列車商務艙/往生
Mǎi-yī-zhāng-dēngxiān-lièchē-shāngwùcāng/wǎng-sheng
 Buy-one-CL-aboard-immortal-train-business-class/bound-for-life
 ‘Buying a business-class ticket for the train to heaven/Being bound for another life’.

Such a deep culturally loaded conception of the life cycle is even realized in novel expressions as shown by the passage in (19) in which the cosmos is metaphorically realized as a super-large computer, and each individual within it is a small computer with the capacity to record all of the details of his or her life. When a person is leaving this world, the small computer will review the life of that person at tremendous speed.

- (19) 宇宙間有一部非常大的超級大電腦，每個人就像一部小電腦，錄著這一生的一切。既將離開人世的時候，小電腦會以極快的速度回顧這一生。
Yúzhòu-jiān-yǒu-yī-bù-fēicháng-dà-de-chāoji-dà-diànnǎo měi-gè-rén-jiù xiàng-yī-bù-xiǎo-diànnǎo-lù-zhè-zhè-yīshēng-de-yīqiē-jìjiāng-likāi-rénshì-de-shíhòu-xiǎo-diànnǎo-huì-yǐ-jíkuài-de-sùdù-huīgù-zhè-yīshēng
 Universe-between-have-one-CL-very-big-DE-super-big-computer-everyone-just-like-one-CL-small-computer-record-ZHE-this-life-DE-everything-soon-leave-world- DE-time-small-computer-will-with-extremely-fast-DE-speed-review-this-life.

‘While the universe is a supercomputer, each one of us is just like a small computer, recording everything happening in our lives. When we are about to leave the world, the small computers will review our lives at an extremely fast speed.’

9.5 Pedagogical Implications

In the extant literature of the teaching of Chinese for Specific Purposes, only a few studies have explored the use of Chinese for general common health themes. Some studies give an overview of aspects of Chinese medicine such as acupuncture (e.g., Peng 2016). Some provide useful situational Chinese sentence patterns for medical treatment such as how to make a doctor’s appointment, how to get around in a hospital, how to describe physical symptoms to doctors, how to pay medical fees, and the like (e.g., Tsai 2017). Still others provide situational Chinese vocabulary or phrases for teaching foreign nursing worker aides (e.g., Yeh 2014). While these materials are useful for the situations described, there seems to be little systematic and in-depth investigation into the linguistic choices available in Chinese for topics such as aging, illness, and particularly death. Nevertheless, events like these will need to be discussed since they are unavoidable. To circumvent the problem of bringing up these topics directly, metaphorical expressions related to the above-mentioned topics function as useful devices to refer to such topics in indirect and euphemistic ways, hence maintaining interactional politeness as the uncomfortable feelings of the addressees are acknowledged.

Although quite natural, aging, getting sick and dying are still unpleasant situations that are distressing. Metaphorical expressions give rise to expressions producing comforting effects while conveying points about the unpleasant topics in an indirect manner. The projected imagery of going on another journey such as

discussed in the previous section seems to make the issues related to death less difficult to accept by leveling down the degree of sadness and embarrassment. Hence, it is a useful undertaking to raise the awareness of foreign learners of Chinese on the metaphorical expressions used in Chinese and to improve their comprehension of such expressions.

9.5.1 Cognitive Learning and Explicit Instruction

Researchers in the field of second language acquisition contend that learners' awareness of linguistic motivations is the key to second language acquisition (Ammar et al. 2010; Ellis 2002). Cognitive perspectives on SLA support this claim and stress the beneficial effects of enhanced awareness in language learning (Boers and Lindstromberg 2006; Ellis 2006), particularly in the learning of metaphors. There is accumulated evidence in favor of the use of a cognitive-oriented method which focuses on providing training in the use of conceptual metaphors in raising the awareness of L2 learners, improving their comprehension, and enhancing retention as learning metaphor along with conceptual metaphor (cf. Boers 2000a, b). However, adopting conceptual metaphor as an instruction raises a concern about whether enough cognitive supports will be provided to the L2 learners. Only supplying a conceptual metaphor on its own requires L2 learners to elaborate the isomorphic structure which connects a source and target domain themselves, and the process may be constrained by the pre-existing L1 framework (Littlemore 2009; Ellis 2006) or be influenced by each individual's own cognitive style (Boers and Littlemore 2000; Littlemore 2001; Chen et al. 2014).

To address these concerns, more direct and explicit guidance should be integrated into any instruction. Kövecses (2001) proposes that a methodology which includes explicit instruction in the use of metaphors based on the understanding of metaphors as conceptual mappings can assist learners to form better conceptual associations between two domains. Instruction in ontological mapping, which maps the correspondences between the basic constituent elements of the source and target domains, may assist learners to associate entities across two distinct conceptual domains. On the other hand, instruction in epistemic mapping, which maps knowledge about the source domain onto knowledge about the target domain, may assist learners in understanding the reasoning involved in analogies.

Instruction in the use of conceptual mappings may allow learners to relate their knowledge of the abstract to the concrete. It not only values learners' awareness of semantic motivation, but also aids in resolving possible linguistic and cultural gaps by utilizing the already existent world knowledge and universal concepts of the learners.

Regarding concerns about the differences in the individual cognitive styles of learners, the application of conceptual mapping has been found to result in a better awareness of expressions which involve complicated and abstract mapping relationships, and to allow for better comprehension of expressions which are distinctive from L1 usages. Empirical evidence also supports the claims of potential benefits.

In the study of Chen et al. (2014), the cognitive styles of the participant EFL learners were cross-checked with their performances on an awareness test and on a retention test of metaphorical expressions. The results show that learners with a holistic/field-dependent cognitive style benefited more from being given explicit instruction about conceptual metaphors, while learners with an analytic/field-independent cognitive style performed better when supported with information on conceptual mappings. Instruction involving conceptual mappings is thus proved to facilitate the construction of correlative relationships between abstract concepts in the mind of the learner, and so the comparative ease in the learning of metaphors which is enjoyed by learners with holistic cognitive styles of learning can also be extended to those with analytic/field-independent cognitive styles of learning.

Finally, when dealing with culturally specific metaphors, instruction on conceptual mappings bridges some of the gaps between two cultures by displaying the correspondences between the entities of the two conceptual domains, and by facilitating L2 learners in linking what is known to what is not known. The empirical evidence from Kövecses' (2001) study with Hungarian EFL learners and from Chen and Lai's (2014, 2015) studies with Chinese EFL learners provides positive support for explicit instruction. Instruction related to the clear and detailed correspondences between two complex structures of conceptual domains can be illustrated by reference to conceptual mappings so as to facilitate L2 acquisition by helping learners to construct a new construal system of the L2 (Ellis 2006; Littlemore 2009).

In sum, while explicit instruction about the application of conceptual mappings and explicit instruction about conceptual metaphors are both helpful for L2 learners in learning metaphorical expressions, instruction about conceptual mappings can provide additional benefits to help learners overcome the problems caused by L1–L2 transfer and non-language influences, such as cognitive styles.

9.5.2 Implications for Teaching Chinese Metaphorical Euphemism

A review of the roles of cognitive learning and explicit instruction leads to a discussion of the pedagogical implications for teaching and learning metaphorical euphemisms. The principles include: (1) The conceptual metaphors in euphemistic expressions should be made explicit to learners, considering the metaphorical nature of the euphemisms; (2) the conceptual mappings which conceptual metaphors consist of should be introduced to learners to facilitate the use of the cognitive processes involved in the establishment of the capacity to construe the meaning of metaphor; (3) the use of explicit instruction, which emphasizes the learners' awareness of the metaphorical nature of the language through direct intervention, should be adopted. In abiding by these principles, the indirect and euphemistic features of the metaphoric euphemisms can be learned in a systematic and effective way.

In the present study of the use of end-of-life euphemism in Chinese, the analysis of Chinese euphemistic expressions of aging, illness, and death has revealed the metaphorical nature of such expressions: The method of the analysis of LIFE IS A JOURNEY which is an easily recognized generic conceptual metaphor euphemizing such topics can be extended to other metaphorical uses of LIFE IS A JOURNEY. An elaboration of the conceptual mappings of the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY for instructional purposes is demonstrated in (20):

- (20) Conceptual mappings of LIFE IS A JOURNEY
Ontological mappings of LIFE IS A JOURNEY:

Source: JOURNEY	←→	Target: LIFE
• Travelers	←→	• People
• Journey	←→	• Lifetime
• Fatigue/injury	←→	• Illness
• Destination	←→	• End of life

Epistemic mappings of LIFE IS A JOURNEY:

Source: JOURNEY	←→	Target: LIFE
• Travelers go through different places and have various experiences	←→	• People go through different life phases and have various life experiences
• Travelers travel a long way, suffer from fatigue or injury, and move closer to the end	←→	• People live for a long time, get old, and become weak in health and age as time passes
• Travelers finally reach the destination and stop traveling	←→	• People reach the end of life and cease living

The LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor can be inferred to apply not only in the case of human beings, but also in the case of other organisms that exhibit the property of life, such as living plants or animals. The knowledge of the life cycle can be applied to other organisms. Thus, the expressions regarding the various stages of the growth of plants can be illustrated through the extensions of LIFE IS A JOURNEY, as shown in (21). Examples of linguistic instantiation are referred to as in (6) to (9).

- (21) Epistemic extensions of LIFE IS A JOURNEY on plants
Inference: Plants are organisms. → Plants live a life. → Life of plants is a journey.
Ontological mappings of LIFE OF PLANTS IS A JOURNEY:

Source: JOURNEY	←→	Target: LIFE OF PLANTS
• Travelers	←→	• Plants
• Journey	←→	• Growth
• Close to the end	←→	• Withering
• Destination	←→	• Death

Epistemic mappings of LIFE OF PLANTS IS A JOURNEY:

Source: JOURNEY	←→	Target: LIFE OF PLANTS
• Travelers go through different places and have various experiences	←→	• Plants go through different stages of form as they grow and mature
• Travelers travel a long way, suffer from fatigue or injury, and move closer to the end	←→	• Plants grow, suffer from sickness, and gradually wither
• Travelers finally reach the destination and stop traveling	←→	• Plants reach the end of life and die

Another type of extension of LIFE IS A JOURNEY is inferred with reference to the tools of traveling, or the vehicles used, to be specific. The extension is illustrated as in (22) and can be instantiated in examples (10)–(14).

(22) Epistemic extensions of LIFE IS A JOURNEY on vehicles

Inference: Traveling needs tools or vehicles. → Vehicles for traveling may include cars, ships, and planes. → Life is a journey in a (selected) vehicle.

Ontological mappings of LIFE IS A JOURNEY IN A VEHICLE:

Source: JOURNEY	←→	Target: LIFE
• Travelers	←→	• People
• Vehicles	←→	• Body
• Mechanical problems	←→	• Illness
• Destination	←→	• End of life

Epistemic mappings of LIFE IS A JOURNEY IN A VEHICLE:

Source: JOURNEY	←→	Target: LIFE
• Travelers in vehicles go through different places and have various experiences	←→	• People live with their bodies through different life phases
• Vehicles gradually get old, get rusted, or are impeded by obstacles on the way	←→	• People’s bodies gradually age, become ill and sick, and even become disabled as time goes by
• Travelers in vehicles finally reach the destination and stop traveling	←→	• People reach the end of life, their bodies stop functioning, and they cease living

9.5.3 Implications for Chinese for the Purpose of Long-Term Nursing Education

Every journey comes to an end eventually. It is incontrovertible that there is no way to hide from mentioning the topics of aging, illness, and death. It is necessary for aged persons themselves, the family, and healthcare professionals to have the ability to talk about such taboo topics while maintaining pragmatic appropriateness.

The conceptual mappings demonstrated in 5.2 prove the feasibility of learning and teaching metaphorical euphemism through explicit instruction. Learners can be equipped with the formal linguistic knowledge of metaphorical euphemism that they need to develop productive skills, i.e., the ability to communicate with others. The comprehension of the pragmatic conditions for appropriate interaction is an essential indicator of pragmatic and cultural competence.

The world is facing the reality of the acceleration of the aging of its population. The number of people aged 65 and over is projected to grow from an estimated 500 million in 2010 to nearly 1.5 billion in 2050 (United Nations 2018). An aging population brings a greater demand for long-term care. Communication about end-of-life topics is no longer limited within the intimate groups, like family and friends, but has been extended to health professionals, including medical staff and caregivers. Issues such as the social distance caused by power imbalances may intensify the uncomfortableness and embarrassment, and thwart the initiation of conversation.

The use of language is central to the practice and provision of health care, and to mediate the ways of experiencing illness; it can both facilitate and hinder positive experiences and good quality in health care (Semino et al. 2018). The art of successful communication depends on using the right tool appropriately. Discussion between family and healthcare professionals about the long-term care plans for the loved one is encouraged. Communication between the elderly and the family is also necessary in order to raise awareness for the handling of important issues. Moreover, a direct understanding of meaning in communication between the elderly and the nursing staff can help relieve emotional stress and even palliate pain.

Metaphors are a tool for use in skillful communication. If used inappropriately, metaphors may cause misunderstandings and confusion; yet, with skillful application, metaphors can facilitate challenging discussions, improve patient comprehension, and help patients and their families to plan ahead. The Oxford Textbook of Palliative Nursing (Ferrell et al. 2001: 521) suggests that nursing staff use metaphors to discuss death with families. Researchers also encourage medical practitioners (e.g., Hui et al. 2017) and nursing staff (e.g., Berdes and Eckert 2007) to empathize with patients in pain or the elderly in nursing homes by using metaphors.

The journey metaphor illustrates the experience of illness, including the end of life. It can be used in a variety of ways, including to express both positive and negative emotions and to refer to different stages of life. The use of the metaphorical euphemism rooted in the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor can empower the participants in a conversation to explain the stages of treatment, to discuss end-of-life plans, and to express feelings related to being aged or ill.

9.6 Conclusion

The ability to carry out social exchanges on taboo topics and ideas in an appropriate way is thus a demonstration of communicative competence. Such ability is necessary for medical professionals—the target language users for the medical and

nursing purposes—to conduct effective communication with people looking for health advice; moreover, it is also important for language learners to properly express themselves about sensitive health topics, including, but not limited to, aging, becoming ill, dying, and death.

Such communicative competence is also stressed by internationally recognized language proficiency indexes: The ACTFL (2012: 4) emphasizes the appropriate use of language, saying that ‘[p]roficiency is the ability to use language in real world situations in a spontaneous interaction and non-rehearsed context and in a manner acceptable and appropriate to native speakers of the language.’ The CEFR (Council of Europe 2011) defines communicative language competence as comprising components like linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences. While linguistic competence refers to the linguistic system itself, sociolinguistic competence refers to the knowledge of values and beliefs held by social groups, such as religion and taboos, and pragmatic competence refers to the functional uses of language. It is a necessary step for language learners to understand the essence, function, and purpose of euphemistic expressions to enhance their communicative competence. Knowing about and understanding the metaphorical nature of euphemistic expressions can therefore assist language learners to be aware of them, to comprehend them, and to produce them appropriately.

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