

# Metaphorical Analysis of the Concepts of "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan"

Guo Yang\*

Nanning Normol Universite, Chinese language Department, Nanning, Guangxi, China

**Abstract.** "Zhu Yan", "Hong Yan" by the color morphemes, most readers think that these two are synonyms, the text can be arbitrarily replaced, but this is not the case. Although the two are similar in certain contexts, tracing them back to their roots reveals that there are differences between them. In recent years, with the progress of the society and the innovation of theories, many researchers have found that there is a great connection between metaphors and color words, which can enrich the connotation of each other if they are studied together. In this paper, on the basis of traditional exegesis, we find the literature and combine it with the theory of metaphor to analyze the "Hong Yan" and "Zhu Yan", in order to reveal the similarities and differences between the two.

## 1.Introduction

In the world of language, color words play an extremely important role as a unique medium for expressing emotions, portraying images, and transmitting cultural values, and we seem to be able to smell the emotions and cultural deposits welling up in them. <sup>1</sup>Zhu Yan and Hong Yan are both related to color and appearance, but deeper into the text and in context they are found to imply a deeper understanding of life, beauty, and gender roles. Cognitive linguistics provides a new perspective for examining linguistic phenomena through conceptual metaphors, through which we can deeply analyze the similarities and differences between "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" in literary works, character depictions, and the use of idioms, and trace the unique interpretations of color-word metaphors in the society in order to try to reveal the latent cultural perceptions and social concepts behind the differences.<sup>2</sup>

## 2.Linguistic color and Cultural Exploration of Zhu Yan and Hong Yan

In the rich and varied universe of language, color vocabulary plays a mysterious and fascinating role. Among them, "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan", as representatives of colors, seem to be intertwined in our perception. However, when we delve deeper into these two terms, we find that they are not as simple as they seem. This is the subtle and profound relationship between "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan", a linguistic feast of colors, beauty, and gender roles, full of literary emotions and cultural deposits.

In the traditional conception, "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" are often regarded as interchangeable synonyms, both of which imply the image of red color, and seem to

differ only slightly in the way they are expressed. However, this thesis will take the reader through the boundaries of the text and delve into the conceptual metaphors of the two, revealing their subtle similarities and differences in context.<sup>3</sup>By crawling through the foundations of traditional exegesis and combining it with the theory of conceptual metaphor in cognitive linguistics, we will reveal the more profound cultural connotations underlying these two terms. Color vocabulary carries a wealth of cultural symbols in language and serves as a bridge between emotion, literature and culture. "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" have gained attention precisely because they are not just words that describe colors, but also carry a unique understanding of life, beauty and gender roles. In this linguistic arena, each of their letters seems to tell a story of love, joy and sorrow. The importance of color words in language, mentioned in the introduction, is not only a tool for describing colors, but also a unique medium for expressing emotions, portraying images, and conveying cultural values. Among them, "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" are like an artist's palette, through which we can get a glimpse of the author's insights into life, beauty and gender. However, these two are not simply color descriptions; they are the art of metaphor in literature, a profound reflection on language.

Conceptual metaphor, an important theory of cognitive linguistics, provides us with a new perspective to examine linguistic phenomena. In this perspective, we will no longer only see "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" as representations of the color red, but will understand them in a broader cultural context. Through a in-depth analysis of these two terms, we will explore their similarities and differences in literary works, characterization and idiomatic usage, and try to reveal the cultural perceptions and social concepts behind them. The words "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" play colorful roles in

\*1390411607@qq.com

literary works, and they are unique linguistic elements that shape the image of characters. Through a comparative study of the two, we can have a more comprehensive understanding of their evolution and application in different works. This comparison is not only a contrast of language forms, but also a collision of literary ideas, a refraction of the changing times and changing social concepts. Through this layer-by-layer analysis, we will enter into the literary world of "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan", and appreciate the profound connotations contained therein.<sup>4</sup>

In this opening journey, we will follow the mysterious words "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" through the time and space of words, tracing their origins and analyzing their connotations. As the paper progresses, we will reveal the uniqueness of these two words in literature, language and culture. This is an exploration of color and metaphor, and a profound reflection on human cultural perceptions.<sup>5</sup>

### 3.The original meaning of "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan"

From the point of view of word formation, "朱颜" and "红颜" consist of "朱" and "红" plus "颜" to form a noun, which are synthetic words. "朱" and "红" as a definite article modifying "颜", a paratactic structure, with "朱" and "红" at the center of the paratactic. Therefore, the focus of the study should also be on "朱" and "红", "颜" as the center of the face meaning. The word "Hong Yan" first appeared in Han Shu. "Zhu Yan" first appeared in *Chu Ci*.

**Table 1.** The following is a tabular list of the interpretations of Zhu Yan and Hong Yan in the *Hanyu Da Cidian* as an example:

Zhu Yan	Hong Yan
1.A rosy and beautiful face	1.Refers to the rosy cheeks of the young.
2.indicate youthfulness	2.Refers to juveniles.
3.Beauty; beautiful women.	3.Referring to a beautiful woman.
4.And a pleasant face. Expresses affectionate trust.	4.It refers to a woman's beautiful face.
5.Blush. Describes a drunken face.	
6.Blush.Blushing color.	

A comparison of the two denotations in Table 1 shows that: "Zhu Yan" has a slightly larger number of meanings than "Hong Yan", Horizontal comparison shows that the first three meanings of "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" are the same or similar, roughly having the meaning of rosy and beautiful face, young and beautiful women. Longitudinal comparisons show that the fourth and third denotative terms of "Hong Yan" are highly correlated and work directly in the female role. The fourth denotation of "Zhu Yan" is weakly related to its first three denotations, and the fifth and sixth denotations are only different in the emotional process of causing blushing but the result is the same, which is weakly related to the first four denotations.

The traditional Chinese character for "红" is "紅", From its font we can tell that "紅" is both a morpheme and an ideogram. Left-right structure, polyphonic, with the left being a righteous symbol meaning silk fabric, and the right working epithet. The earliest appearance of the glyphs in simple silks of the Chu. According to the Zhou Li records, the Zhou Dynasty palace workshops with a full-time official "dyeing people", in charge of silk and silk dyeing. At that time, the dyeing process has been quite developed, people not only invented the mordant dyeing method, but also mastered the set dyeing process. As a result of a large number of fabrics of various colors, the natural color has sought to name the new. "緜", "纁", "紺", "緇", "绿", "紫", "红", "绛", "緌", "緹" and so on in *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*. All of them are monikers for the color of "bo" (帛) that appeared in the Zhou and Qin Dynasties. Among them, "绿", "紫" and "红" soon acquired a generalized meaning of color. As we can see from the above, the original meaning of "Hong" is to refer to the item - light red silk, silk is a general term for silk fabrics, the main use of red to indicate the color of the silk, not to indicate that the item of silk. Later, with the development of society and culture, "Hong" gradually gained the meaning of general color.<sup>6</sup>

### 4.The target domains of "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" from a metaphorical perspective

Besides, Chinese people have long been influenced by ancient traditional thinking, and tend to use indirect communication for some sensitive, erotic and vulgar matters, so Chinese people often exude a cryptic style in their lines and conversations. In literary works authors are more inclined to use the target domain to implicitly express their views or opinions on events and express their true inner feelings, rather than directly listing the source domain on the paper.<sup>7</sup> The terms "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" are typical examples of the clever use of this perspective.

#### 4.1. A Metaphorical Study of "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan"

In cognitive linguistics, metaphor is not only a rhetorical method, but also a basic tool for cognizing the world. In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lecov and Johnson put metaphors into the cognitive world for research, and argued that the essence of metaphors is mapping across conceptual domains, that is, following the principle of constancy, selective mapping from the source domain to the target domain, and recognizing the source domain through the target domain, and that metaphors are used subconsciously, which is also a way commonly used by human beings to recognize and understand other abstract concepts.<sup>8</sup> Metaphor sees "Zhu" and "Hong" as a kind of archetypal meaning - the source domain, the color domain is an important domain of human cognitive world, it is an important domain of linguistic cognition along with the domain of emotion, the domain of value, the domain of

the human body, and so on, and the mechanism of reference metaphors is an important way to push forward the transformation of the original meaning of the color words into the archetypal semantics of the non-color words. "Zhu", "Hong" is a color word of the same color system, color words, in addition to their own color meaning, but also a large number of "Yan" outside the meaning, "Yan" outside the meaning is often used in the sense of mapping other meanings, and this meaning is often derived from metaphors.

#### 4.2. Mapping to historical and cultural domains

Sapir once said that culture lies behind language. Vocabulary is the part of the language system that changes most frequently and cannot exist independently of culture. Early man reflected natural phenomena only through color words, and in primitive societies natural phenomena associated with the color red were worshipped or favored by certain tribes, such as blood, sun and fire. "Rites three positive record" said: "summer Shang black, Yin Shang white, Zhou Shang red, this is called the three unity." "Spring and Autumn Annals - Yuan life package" and "music latitude - Jiyaojia" cloud: "the week in November for the positive, the rest of the trigrams subject to the resumption of the color is still red, to the middle of the night for the first day of the month." Can be seen on the Zhou Dynasty, there has been "still red" said. Late Paleolithic Zhokoudian Shandingdong site excavated ochre powder-dyed stone beads, the Shandingdong people's habit of sprinkling ochre powder on the bodies usually when burying clan members. It can be largely confirmed through the efforts of philologists and archaeologists that the earliest natural pigment used by humans was usually red.<sup>9</sup> The reason why human beings used red more frequently in the early days was that it was easier and more convenient than other colors in terms of production process and ingestion of raw materials. With the development of the times and the needs of human social progress, the meaning expressed by color words is not only limited to color, but also has a deeper cultural connotation, which has different changes in different times. Human beings often have two levels of cultural connotations for color words, on the one hand, they consider this type of color as positive and active, and on the other hand, they consider it as vulgar and gloomy, for example, red is considered as a symbol of good luck and celebration on the one hand, but on the other hand, it has the meanings of blood and violence.

In addition to this, the ancient ceremonial music law is numerous and complicated in process, and the color culture formed mainly by color words is an important part of the national culture, so the colors are subjected to the ancient culture in learning and living. The concepts of five colors, five elements, five positions, etc. were also nurtured one after another in this environment.

#### 4.3. Mapping to the Literature Domain

"Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" are high-frequency words in literary creation. People's fondness for different red color

words varies from person to person, with "Zhu Yan" emphasizing health, vitality, and auspiciousness, and "Hong Yan" emphasizing beauty, good fortune, and celebration. With the loss and transfer of the positive red meaning of the character "Chi (赤)", its status as a positive color was challenged by color words such as "Hong" and "Zhu", especially during the Middle Tang Dynasty when a large number of poems emerged, the character "Hong" and "Zhu". The number of times "Hong" and "Zhu" were used in the literature increased and gradually replaced "Chi", so in the late development of "Chi" and "Zhu". Therefore, the boundary between "Chi", "Zhu" and "Hong" tends to be blurred, of course, this change is also related to the ambiguity of the red color words themselves. Because of the early influence of the concepts of five colors and positive colors, "Zhu" generally only appears in more serious and formal occasions, while "Hong Yan" lacks this solemn color.

From the perspective of mapping "Zhu" and "Hong", we can further discover the differences between "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan". Before the Tang and Song dynasties, due to the influence of the five colors and the concept of positive color, "Chi", "Chi Se", "Zhu", "Zhu Yan" is used more frequently than "Hong", "Hong Yan", and its positive red meaning has not been transferred, and has always occupied the dominant position in the red color words. From the Tang Dynasty onwards, the rapid social and economic development led to continuous changes in the cultural industry, and "Hong" was gradually changed from "Fen Hong" to "red", and "Chi" and "Zhu" gradually lost the meaning of red, and it was used to depict women's beauty and charisma, which was reflected in many cultural works of the same period. Fu Yi's *WuFu* of the Han Dynasty: "The appearance is smart and wonderful with demonic compulsion, and the red color yeh its Yanghua." The term "Hong Yan" here refers to a woman's beautiful face. With the development of the times, the meaning of "Hong Yan" is gradually enriched, and its meaning is not only the depiction of beautiful appearance, but also implies the meaning of short-lived beauty and ill-fated, such as Hong Yan Bo Ming, Hong Yan Yi Lao and so on. The evolution of "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" is not only an evolution of language, but also a true reflection of the outside world. In ancient literature, the term "Hong Yan" is more often used to depict the beauty of a woman's face, and this beauty often carries a hint of fugitive, fleeting meaning.<sup>10</sup> Cao Zhi's *Jing Si Fu*: "What a beautiful woman is a rotten demon, and her red face is bright and flowing with light." In *Hong Lou Meng*: "Once the spring is over, the red face grows old, and the flowers fall and the people die without knowing it." In all these places, the term "Hong Yan" is used to refer to a woman's perishable face. In addition, similar to "Hong Yan", there are also "Yu Rong" (玉容) and "Yu Yan" (玉颜), etc., which are often mapped to a woman's face or beauty. For example, Bai Juyi's *Chang Hen Ge* says: "In the mud under Mawei's lope, I don't see the jade face dying."

#### 4.4. Mapping to the gender role field

The terms "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" are not only widely mapped in the literary domain, but are also influential in the gender roles domain. "Zhu Yan" is mostly used to depict women's youth and health, symbolizing vitality, optimism, positive attitude and outlook on life. "Hong Yan" is used to depict the beauty of women as well as to praise beauty. Meng Jiao's "Spring colors do not choose the plants next to the tomb, but the red faces and white colors go away in the spring." In Du Anshi's *Yu Meiren*, "The red face and green temples make people grow old. When will the world come to an end?" All of these verses reflect the idealized expectations of women in ancient societies that women should remain youthful, beautiful, healthy and energetic. However, the target domain of "Hong Yan" has gradually been given deeper connotations, including the contemplation of women's looks and destiny, as well as cultural connotations relevant to the development of the times, and the metaphorical phenomenon has been shifted and transformed, which, however, is more relevant to reflecting the sorrow and pessimism of the ancient society towards the miscarriages of fortune of beautiful women. Although "Hong Yan" still has the meaning of praising a woman's appearance, but the creation of phrases such as "the red face ages easily" and "the red face has a thin life" It reflects people's concern and thinking about the status of women. It shows the complex emotions and understanding of women in ancient society, and at the same time influences today's understanding of women's images and roles. The difference between the two reflects the different understanding and feelings of ancient and modern societies about women, their looks and destiny, and is an important reference for understanding the cultural values and social concepts of ancient Chinese society. *Ci Yuan* explains "Zhu Yan" as the reddish face, which also refers to the beautiful face of a young person. The rosy cheeks have no obvious gender modifiers and can refer to both men and women. According to Sun Weilan, for example, Song Yu's *Zhao Hun* contains the line "The beauty is drunk and her face is flushed", which describes the drunken demeanor of the king of Chu during the court banquet, and is intended to reveal the inner reasons for the decline of the state of Chu.

In addition to the female character domain, "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" can also be mapped to the male character domain to refer to the appearance of a male, as well as to the appearance of a young person or the time of youth. *Ci Yuan* explains "Zhu Yan" as "rosy cheeks", which also refers to the beautiful face of a young man. There is no obvious gender modification in the meaning of "rosy cheeks", which can refer to both men and women. According to Sun Weilan, for example, Song Yu's *Zhao Hun* contains the line "The beauty is drunk and her face is flushed", which describes the drunken demeanor of the king of Chu during the court banquet, and is intended to reveal the inner reasons for the decline of the state of Chu. *Li Sao* also often uses "beauty" as a metaphor for the king of Chu, such as "The sun and the moon are not flooded, and I fear that the beauty will be late". *Li Bai's Shu Dao Nan* "The road to Shu is more difficult than

going up to the sky, making people wither their faces when they listen to it." Here the hyperbole is used to emphasize the difficulty of the road to Shu, and "Zhu Yan" should refer to the face of a man. Feng Yansi's *Que Ta Zhi* "I am always sick in front of the flowers day after day, and my face is thin in the mirror". The main character mentioned in the sentence is the lyricist herself, who is "sick and drunk every day", and who is "thin in the mirror" as a result of drinking to drown her sorrows. The same phenomenon occurs with the term "Hong Yan", The Dictionary defines "Hong Yan" as "the rosy cheeks of a young man." Liu Yuxi's *Dai Bei Bai Tou Weng*, which reads: "This weng has a pitiful white head, and I used to be a beautiful young man with a red face", uses the word "Hong Yan" to map out the appearance of the Weng who has a vicissitude of life and is full of white hair, but his demeanor is young and energetic, which is a contrasting image. The contrasting image of youthfulness and vigor. *Li Bai, Tang Dynasty, Liu Ye Lang Zeng Xin Pan Guan* "Are you willing to fall behind others in terms of style? I am a young man with a red face." In ancient times, Fu Zi often referred to young adult men, and "Hong Yan" was used as a predicate after Fu Zi, so "Hong Yan" here obviously refers to a man's appearance.

#### 4.5. Mapping to the Idiom Domain

The words "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" are not only used in poems and songs, but also in idioms. In the cultural connotation of idioms, "hong" can be mapped to flowers in addition to colors. For example, *Lv Fei Hong Shou* (绿肥红瘦); *Hong Xiu Tian Xiang* (红袖添香) can be mapped to a beautiful young woman; *Deng Hong Jiu Lv* (灯红酒绿) can be mapped to a bustling scene. The cultural connotations of "Zhu" are as follows: the first refers to a large red color, such as "Hao Chi Zhu Chun" (皓齿朱唇); the second refers to rouge or a woman with a pretty face, such as "Shi Zhu Fu Fen" (施朱傅粉); and the third, as mentioned above, denotes a person of wealth or high status, such as "Zhu Men" or "Zhu Que". "Hong Yan Bai Fa" (红颜白发) is interpreted as a robust old man or a red-faced girl and a white-haired old man. Although the robust old man and the white-haired old man are older and have white hair, their temperament is young, their pace is light, and their face is rosy and no different from that of a young man; therefore, Zhu Yan is used to describe the rosy face, reflecting the youthfulness of the atmosphere.

### 5. Conclusions

In conclusion, this paper, under the background of cognitive linguistics, through the metaphorical cross-conceptual domain mapping, the study of "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" found that we can not only understand how the ancient literati constructed the mood and expressed their emotions through language, but also vertically penetrate into their unique insights into life, women's image and beauty. "Zhu Yan" is mainly used to describe women's health and vitality, showing a passionate admiration for life, a characteristic that makes Zhu Yan



often used to depict optimistic and positive situations. Due to the influence of the ancient concept of positive color, "Zhu" is often used in formal and serious occasions. In contrast, "Hong Yan" focuses more on the depiction and praise of beautiful women, especially on the sentiment of the transience of beauty and the impermanence of life, as well as the expression of mourning and negative attitudes towards life, and is therefore more often used in certain deep and mournful contexts. This is also the result of the shift in the metaphorical meaning of "Hong" as a color word. The differences between the two words lie in their hidden socio-cultural values, which not only help us to understand the word differences accurately, but also reveal to us the aesthetic concepts and the way women were portrayed in the ancient Chinese society, and enable us to have a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and history. At the same time, through the in-depth analysis and comparison of "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan", we can better understand and appreciate the language art and emotional expression of the ancient literati, which also has an important revelation and influence on literary creation, metaphor derivation, and cultural research.

In this in-depth exploration of the terms "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan", we are unraveling the mystery of these two terms as if we were tracing the vein of time, layer by layer. This is not just a linguistic interpretation, but also an examination of cultural diversity and the depth of human cognition.<sup>11</sup>By analyzing the conceptual metaphors of these two terms, we find that they carry cultural connotations that go far beyond our superficial understanding. The terms "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" are not simply descriptions of colors, but a profound reflection on life, beauty and gender roles. This is not only reflected in their use in literature, but also in their insights into human emotions and social concepts. In a comparative study, we traverse the variations of these two in different periods and literary works. They may be a celebration of female appearance in ancient poetry, while they may carry more complex social concepts in modern literature. This contrast is not only a comparison of vocabulary forms, but also a reflection of literary ideas and social changes. Through this in-depth excavation, we can see more clearly the multi-faceted nature of "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" on the literary stage. The use of conceptual metaphors provides us with a new perspective on the phenomenon of language. Through this new perspective, we see that "Zhu yan" and "Hong yan" go beyond the superficial color to become a broader cultural symbol. This transcendence enables us to understand more deeply the power of language and the unique contribution of color words in literary expression.

In the end, when we look back on this thesis, the mystery of "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" does not end here, but opens up to more profound thinking. This is just the beginning of a journey of discovery, and the fascination of these two terms will continue to shine through academic research and literary creation. "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" will always shine in our forest of thoughts, providing us with never-ending revelations.<sup>12</sup>Perhaps this paper can inspire more scholars and researchers to pay deeper attention to language, literature and culture.

Perhaps, it can become an opportunity for more in-depth research on color vocabulary and cultural symbols in the future. "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" tell not only the story of color, but also a mystery of intertwined literature, language and culture, waiting for us to unravel. In this vast ocean of culture, the journey of exploration of "Zhu Yan" and "Hong Yan" will continue forever, bringing us new thoughts and revelations.

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