

On cyber-language style from philosophy of mind: Taking *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* as an example

Yurong Wang, Li Lin

Department of English, College of Foreign Languages, China Three Gorges University, Yichang, China

Email address:

1058940294@qq.com (Yurong Wang), 786343846@qq.com (Li Lin)

To cite this article:

Yurong Wang, Li Lin. On Cyber-language Style from Philosophy of Mind: Taking *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* as an Example. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*. Vol. 2, No. 2, 2014, pp. 90-94. doi: 10.11648/j.ijll.20140202.16

Abstract: With the rapid development of Internet and global media, cyber-language style becomes popular immediately. Based on the popularity of the documentary *A Bite of China* in China Central Television, the catchphrase *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* comes into being and finally becomes a format frame filling. On its way of popularity, *China* is replaced by many words, so we put an X here to symbolize the words. In this way, the catchphrase *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* is widely used not only in the mass media, but also in people's daily life. From the perspective of the philosophy of mind, language is based on mind and it is the result of intentionality. In order to clarify the quality of language, we should understand the mental ability of language first. Just like any other remarks, *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* is the result of intentionality. In this sense, this paper analyzes the generating, evolving and description of the structure *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* from the perspective of format frame filling and analyzes the root of its formation and popularity as well as the pragmatic effects.

Keywords: *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)*, Philosophy of Mind, Individual Intentionality, Collective Intentionality, Format Frame Filling

1. Introduction

In May 2012, the documentary *A Bite of China (China on the Tip of Tongue)* broadcast by China Central Television in China has aroused extensive attention and hot discussion about Chinese food by the public. It is a documentary Chinese series on the history of food, cooking and eating. At the same time, the title of the documentary become famous afterwards. The structure *A Bite of China (China on the Tip of Tongue)* impressed the public. In this sense, people try to create new phrases by imitating this structure. In this way, I put the phrase into a more general one. That is *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)*. According to the statistics on the internet, *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* ranks the top of the most popular catchphrases at that time in China. Many expressions of the same form spring out like mushrooms in mass media, such as *A Bite of London (London on the Tip of Tongue)*, *A Bite of Consumption (Consumption on the Tip of Tongue)*, etc. Format frame filling remains the most active form in current catchwords in China and many similar expressions produced based on it. In a catchphrase, the ingredients whose meaning is fixed forms into an unchangeable format frame, while the ingredients which refer to detailed situations can be replaced.

This part leads to the change of meaning under different circumstances (Xin Y. Y, 2010).

So far, little research has been done on this structure. From the perspective of meaning expression, Luo Kun categorizes it and analyzes it in great detail and also gives a description of its pragmatic effects (2013). Qu Liwei and Wang Dongmei analyze the formation of the language model and the reason of its popularity from the angle of language model (2013). Xiong Dan explains the syntax and semantics irregularities using construction coercion theory and analyze the rich meanings of the constructions using conceptual metonymy in her postgraduate thesis *A Cognitive Study on the Catchphrase A Bite of China (China on the Tip of Tongue)* (2013). However, the research on its mental operation based on the philosophy of mind is rare.

This paper aims to explore the development of the mental process of *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* and the reason of its popularity. Language is based on mind and for each linguistic behavior, intentionality is the starting point of expression. This is also true of *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)*. Specifically, it is a conversion from individual

intentionality to collective intentionality, which is the reason for its popularization. The title “A Bite of X” here means “X on the Tip of Tongue”, so I put it in brackets for better understanding.

2. Methodology

In this paper, I mainly adopt case studies to enrich my findings. Firstly, I collect all the examples on the internet relating to the structure *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)*, and then I categorize them into different branches according to the word classes of X. During this process, I begin to have a clear understanding of the characteristics of the structure. Through comparison and analyses, I further my study and get the following explanation. Through case studies, I put forward the question first: For different examples of the same structure, is there any similarities or connections and differences among them? How did the structure generate and how did it become famous? Then, I collect many materials and get the following analysis. The structure *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* can be classified according to the character of X and the changing meaning of The less sensitive part “A Bite of”. More details can be seen from the followed explanation.

3. The Generating, Evolving and Description of the Structure

3.1. The Generating of the Structure

Two conditions are needed for its generating. First, social environment in a certain historical period gives catchphrases special meaning. It either expresses emotions of the public or satisfy their mental needs. Second, its novelty caters to people’s evaluation of beauty and satisfies people’s desire for peculiarity and personality. For the expression *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)*, it is the popularization of the documentary that provides a golden opportunity for its popularity. However, the title *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* doesn’t conform to logic. What can appear on the tip of tongue is always food and taste, which are objects that tongue can taste and feel as an organ. For example, *A Bite of Sesame (Sesame Sauce on the Tip of Tongue)*, *A Bite of Bitterness (Bitterness on the Tip of Tongue)*, etc. “China” is a nominal word denoting place, which cannot be put into this structure. So it’s novelty and attractive to the public. In this situation, the structure *A Bite of China (China on the Tip of Tongue)* becomes famous and popular. It refers to Chinese gourmet culture, which is impressive indeed.

3.2. The Evolving to a Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)

With the expansion of the structure *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)*, a catchphrase can adapt to more subjects. In the structure *A Bite of China (China on the Tip of Tongue)*, “China” is replaced by many words in current mass media,

such as “London, dancer, building, summer, love, health” and so on. So, we get the structure *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)*. “*A Bite of (on the Tip of Tongue)*” which is sensitive to meaning is reserved; “China” which is less sensitive is replaced. In this way, the structure *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* gains its popularity. In a catchphrase, the ingredients whose meaning is fixed forms into an unchangeable frame, while the ingredients which refer to detailed situations can be replaced; this part leads to the change of meaning under different circumstances (Xin Yiye, 2010). The sensitive part is called frame part; while the less sensitive part is called frame vacancy. So, it experiences the following change: *A Bite of China (China on the Tip of Tongue)* ⇔ *A Bite of London/Love/Bitterness... (London/Love/Bitterness...on the Tip of Tongue)* ⇔ *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)*.

3.3. The Description of a Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)

Through Google News Searching Engine, the properties of X in the construction and the variants and derivatives of the construction either be nominal phrases denoting place, time and people such as “China”, “Summer” and “Mother-in Law” or verb phrases and adjective phrases like “Regulate and control” and “Safe” in the data.

From the above-mentioned examples, we can categorize X into the following three groups. Table1 is a detailed classification of all the examples.

Table 1. The Classification of the Structure *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)*.

Phrases	Examples
Nominal Phrases	A Bite of Apple (Apple on the Tip of Tongue) A Bite of Love (Love on the Tip of Tongue), A Bite of Childhood (Childhood on the Tip of Tongue), A Bite of London (London on the Tip of Tongue), A Bite of Mother-in-Law (Mother-in Law on the Tip of Tongue), A Bite of Healthy (Health on the Tip of Tongue), A Bite of Building (Building on the Tip of Tongue)...
Verb Phrases	A Bite of Consumption (Consumption on the Tip of Tongue), A Bite of Lure (Lure on the Tip of Tongue), A Bite of Save (Save on the Tip of Tongue)...
Adjective Phrases	A Bite of Safety (Safety on the Tip of Tongue), A Bite of Cool (Cool on the Tip of Tongue)...

In these constructions, the meaning of the tip of tongue changes as well. The tip of tongue is only a part of tongue, which includes perception and conception. From the angle of perception, we get the meaning “action of tasting”. So associated with the tip of tongue are food, taste and feeling. From the perspective of conception, it means the “action of speaking” which includes language, remarks and characteristics of being talkative. In a sense, the meaning of the construction varies both by the influence of X and the changing meaning on “the tip of tongue”.

4. The Explanation from the Philosophy of Mind

4.1. Intentionality: the Starting Point of a Bite of X (*X on the Tip of Tongue*)

The philosophy of mind is based on analytical philosophy and linguistic philosophy. It regards linguistic behavior as the reflection of mental activity and attempts to discover the mental mechanism of our human being aiming at solving the mind-body relationship in philosophy (Liu Peng, 2013). Intentionality, being an important theory in the philosophy of mind, has been comprehensively discussed over the centuries. Intentionality is the power of minds to be about, to represent, or to stand for things, properties and states of affairs (Searle, 2010). Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on (Pierre Jacob, 2010). Intentionality is a property of our mind, which can express belief, desire, wish, dislike, praise and so on, and the relationship of mind and world is achieved by those states (Xu Shenghuan, 2010). People tend to embed their feelings in remarks for emotional communication. This kind of combination produces linguistic symbolization. So language is based on mind. In order to clarify the quality of language, we should understand the mental ability of language first. (Cai Shushan, 2007). Intentionality includes two aspects: content and attitude. The intentionality content refers to the content to be about, which is the main idea the subjects want to convey. The intentionality attitude refers to the attitude the subject is holding (He Aijing, 2012). *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* is also based on intentionality. The content refers to Chinese gourmet culture and the attitude is the adoration of Chinese food. What's the reason for its popularization? It is the successfully conversion from individual intentionality to collective intentionality.

4.2. Individual Intentionality and Collective Intentionality

Intentionality can be classified into individual intentionality and collective intentionality. Collective intention was firstly mentioned by Tuomela and Miller (1988), they pointed out that collective intention is a kind of other-regarding attention. Collective intention is embodied in common social activity for the common goal. In this sense, they also call it group intention or we-intention. After that, collective intention is widely accepted. Collective intentionality is a concept which is existed on the basis of individual intentionality. They are closely-linked with each other. Individual intentionality is the basis of collective intentionality (He Aijing, 2012). If the title of the documentary is Chinese Gourmet Culture, it would be very clear; the title *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* is more novelty and attractive. The tip of tongue is just a tiny part of tongue. How can "China" be put on it? The tip of tongue is sensitive to tasting. So, *A Bite of China*

(*China on the Tip of Tongue*) reflects the special gourmet in China subtly. It grows quickly from individual to group and finally to society, which experiences the conversion from individual intentionality to collective intentionality.

The collective intentionality of the structure *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* can be represented in three aspects. First, it represents the collective intentionality about food. Second, it represents the collective intentionality about feeling. Third, it represents the collective intentionality of the action of speaking.

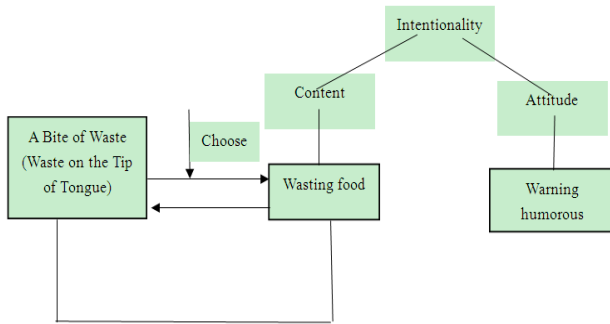
The first aspect can also be subdivided into three parts. Firstly, from the perspective of gourmets, *A Bite of London (London on the Tip of Tongue)* refers to the traditional food and specialties in London. *A Bite of Childhood (Childhood on the Tip of Tongue)* refers to the special snacks we enjoy in childhood which is very delicious and impressive for memorial. *A Bite of The First Time (The First Time on the Tip of Tongue)* refers to the gourmets we experienced at the first time, which is memorable. Secondly, from the perspective of relating to food, *A Bite of Waste (Waste on the Tip of Tongue)* means the waste of every drop of food, which serves as a warning to save food from anytime and any place; *A Bite of Save (Save on the Tip of Tongue)* means to save every drop of food without wasting it. Thirdly, from the perspective of causing by food, *A Bite of Cancer (Cancer on the Tip of Tongue)* refers to cancer caused by improper eating behaviors and food which can not be eaten; *A Bite of Lure (Lure on the Tip of Tongue)* means the lure aroused by delicious food.

A Bite of Happiness (Happiness on the Tip of Tongue) and *A Bite of Love (Love on the Tip of Tongue)* emphasis a strong feeling of happiness and love, which is very precious for people to taste slowly and memorize for good and all. Such kind of subtle feelings are emphasized by this structure. Happiness can not be put on the tip of tongue, but the happy feeling can reach to our tip of tongue. The unique expression meet the needs of expressing people's strong feeling. This is true of *A Bite of Love (Love on the Tip of Tongue)*.

The third aspect can also be subdivided into two parts. First, it means talktive. *A Bite of Mother-in-Law (Mother-in-Law on the Tip of Tongue)* shows that the mother-in law is very talktive, which reflects that mother-in-law is a kind of person who likes to find faults to son-in-law. *A Bite of Control and Regulation (Control and Regulation on the Tip of Tongue)* means regulate and control things by remarks, which shows the power of language. Second, it means hotly-discussed. *A Bite of European Cup (European Cup on the Tip of Tongue)* means that European Cup is hotly discussed by the public. The expression exaggerates people's fever of football match. According to James X. Wu, His paper *A Bite of Apple* which was published in *New York Times* discussed the rapid growing of Apple Company which is hotly discussed by the public (2013). More examples can be seen from Table 2.

5. The Process of Mental Operation

In the following graph, *A Bite of Waste (Waste on the Tip of Tongue)* is taken as an example to show the process of the mental operation of the structure *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* (Wang, 2001):



Graph. the process of the mental operation of the structure *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)*.

Table 2. The meaning of *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* in different situations.

Different meanings caused by different X	Examples
Relating to gourmet	A Bite of Summer/Childhood/France/The First Time (Summer/Childhood/Chong Qing/The first time on the tip of tongue)
Relating to food	A Bite of Waste/Save/National Capital (Waste/Save/National Capital on the tip of tongue)
Caused by food	A Bite of Cancer/Lure (Cancer/Lure on the tip of tongue)
Subtle feelings	A Bite of Happiness/Bitterness/Love/Homesick (Happiness/Bitterness/Love/homesickness on the tip of tongue)
Talktive	A Bite of Mother-in-Law/Control and Regulation (Mother-in-law/Control and Regulation on the tip of tongue)
Hotly discussed	A Bite of European Cup/Share Stock (European Cup/Share Stock on the tip of tongue) A Bite of Apple (Apple on the Tip of Tongue)

In order to gain attention and popularity from the public, language should be novel in its application to achieve communication. In many restaurants in China, there are slogans which read “Refuse Waste on the Tip of Tongue” instead of “Don’t Waste Food”. First, it is deeper in extent to convey meaning. From the tiny part---the tip of tongue, the meaning “Don’t waste any drop of food” is conveyed vividly. Second, this expression can attract people’s attention better for its combination of humorous and warning effects. Nowadays, people in this modern world are under great pressure from many aspects, so subconsciously, they hope to ease pressure through using humorous language. *A Bite of Waste (Waste on the Tip of Tongue)* meets this mental need to some extent. This is the reason for its good effects. The mental process of *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* is the same. Thus the structure *A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue)* gain its popularity.

6. Conclusion

A Bite of X (X on the Tip of Tongue) is a famous format frame filling after the broadcast of the documentary *A Bite of China (China on the Tip of Tongue)*. This paper aims to analyze the formation and popularization by using the theory of intentionality from the perspective of the philosophy of mind. Through case studies, the structure is categorized and analyzed in great detail. The study suggests that the structure *A Bite of X (X on the tip of Tongue)* begins with intentionality and its appearance and popularity is the successfully conversion from individual intentionality to collective intentionality. Different “X” can reflect different meanings and attitudes. It is its novelty that leads to its popularity. Furthermore, from the perspective of the philosophy of mind, the process of the mental operation is studied. Catchphrase not only is a showcase of the diversity of language, but also a mirror of the changing society, so the study is of great significance for the developing of language, as well as the society.

Acknowledgement

This paper is the phased achievement of Social Science Innovation Fund project in China Three Gorges University, Hubei Province in 2013 (The project number is 2013CX094)

References

- [1] Cai. S. S., Conversations with John Searle about 12 Questions Relating to Philosophy, Mind and Cognitive Science, *The academics*. 2007(3)
- [2] He A. J., On Cyber-language Style from Philosophy of Mind: Taking *Taobao* Style as an Example [J], *Modern Foreign Language Study*, 2012(8): 12-16
- [3] He A. J., Research on *Taobao* Style from the Perspective of Intentionality [J], *Journal of Henan University (Social Science)*,2012(4):145-151
- [4] James X. Wu, *A Bite of Apple*, *New York Times*, 2013.
- [5] Luo K, *X on the Tip of Tongue (Shejian Shang De X)* is coming[J],*Journal of Language and Literature Studies*. 2013(1)
- [6] Liu P, Nature of Emphasis from the Theory of Intentionality[J], *Journal of Chongqing University of Posts and Telecommunications (Social Science Edition)*,2013(3):123-126
- [7] Qu L. W, & Wang D. M, The description and evolution of the catchphrase *X on the Tip of Tongue (Shejian Shang De X)* [J]. *Journal of Bohai University (Social Science Edition)*, 2013(4)
- [8] Searle J, *Making the Social World*[J]. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010:25,
- [9] Searle, J. *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* [M]. *Cambridge: Cambridge University Press*. 1983.

- [10] Searle, J. *Mind Language and Society* [M]. *New York: Basic books*. 1998.
- [11] Tuomela R. & Miller K. *We-intentions*. *New York: Philosophical Studies*. 1988:53.
- [12] Wang F. X, *Contrastive Semantics Between English and Chinese*[M], Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2001: 404
- [13] Xin Y. Y, *The Expansion of Catchphrases---from Popularization to Format Frame Filling*[J], *Modern Rhetoric*. 2010(158):33-49
- [14] Xu S. H. *The Explanation of Remarks from Intentionality* [J]. *Chinese Foreign Language*, 2006(4): 33-37
- [15] Xu S. H, *The Philosophy of Mind and the Study of Language*[J]. *Foreign Language and Literature*, 2010 (5):30-35
- [16] Xu S. H, *Language Study from the Philosophy of Mind*, *The Journal of Henan University*. 2011(4)
- [17] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Bite_of_China
- [18] http://english.cntv.cn/special/a_bite_of_china/homepage/index.shtml