A Cultural Cognitive Linguistic Study of Male Garment Description in The Scholars (Chapter1-30)

Zhiting He [1*]

[1] Southwest University, Chongqing, China

*Corresponding author Email: 18235449403@163.com

Abstract: Since the mentioning of cultural cognitive linguistics, there is a shift of cognitive linguistics. However, previous studies have primarily focused on simple feature analysis of the Scholars, failing to either uncover the internal dynamic mechanism of how Wu trying to unveil satire topic through males' garment. To address this gap, this study adopts Wen Xu's partial concepts about cultural cognitive linguistics by establishing effective framework to find how Wu construct social identity, shape character's fate, and reflect the rigid Confucian social hierarchy of mid-18th century China. The study intends to address the following three questions: (1) What cultural metaphors, metonymies, framings are embedded in the male garment descriptions in the first thirty chapters of The Scholars, and how do they project the hidden social hierarchies and ideologies of the Ming and Qing dynasties? (2) How does the framework collectively and dynamically contribute to our understanding of the interplay between language, culture, and cognition? (3) What is the cognitive function of male garment descriptions in the first thirty chapters of The Scholars in terms of activating cultural frames and reflecting the socio-cultural context of Wu's time? Using AntConc for content collection and extraction, the study analyzes the first 30 chapters of this classic book. The findings reveal that cultural metaphorization, cultural metononymization, and cultural framing are effective in analyzing Chinese tradition classics. Interestingly, this paper also finds the internal operation logic among them. Cultural framing, no matter matched or mismatched one, can trigger or map the happenings of cultural metaphorization or cultural metononymization, or both, which is dependent on the specific context and garment descriptions. It also provides practical insights for future classic study.

Keywords: Cognitive Linguistics; Cultural Analysis; Cultural Metaphorization; Cultural Metononymization; Cultural Framing; Garment Description; *The Scholars*

Introduction

This opening chapter contextualizes the thesis from the following four aspects: research background, research purpose, and research significance.

1.1 Research Background

With the advancement of society, material civilization has made great progress in China. Spiritual civilization, particularly in its emphasis on cultural diversity, dimensionality, and revolution, has garnered attention from modern scholars. It is thus rational to conclude that culture is a continuously reconstructed, re-contextualized, renegotiated, and recreated soft power. Culture is not only the sum of knowledge and customs, but also a multifaceted embodiment in terms of systems of knowledge, symbols that empower the world with meaning, behavioral patterns, power structures, and social realities. What's more, it constitutes the shared models that shape human cognition and conduct (Wen Xu, 2025).

Classics are the microcosm of Chinese culture, among which can be found in the satirical literature of Wu Ching-tzu, the author of *The Scholars*. This book depicts the greed, hypocrisy, and ugliness of various types of scholars, exposes the decadence and darkness of feudal society, and criticizes and satirizes the imperial examination system and the feudal ethical code. It is most conspicuously characteristic of "being a lengthy novel but similar to short stories" in structure, "castigating the errors of the times out of unselfish motives, and "sorrow with harmony, elegance with much satire" (Lu Xun, 1930) in the art of irony. This masterpiece manifests various aspects of the Ming and Qing dynasties, such as rituals, beliefs, examinations, attire, etc.

This paper mainly investigates the male's garment description for clothing can be attributed as a cultural phenomenon, showing both the material production of its era and spiritual dimensions. Specifically, it serves as the practical purpose of physical protection and as an integral component of the collective outlook of a society in a particular history. Its dual nature is rooted in the feudal philosophy that establishing strict regulations could effectively safeguard a country's authority (Tang Zihui, 2017).

This paper focuses on first thirty chapters by adopting the Chinese version from People's Literature Publishing House and the English version by Yang Hsienyi and Gladys Yang, who have made great contributions to the spread of Chinese literature and culture. While existing studies have primarily focused on the historical value, social symbolic functions, and translatability of the garment descriptions in *The Scholars*, there remains a limited perception of how the garment, as a cultural symbol, showing the underlying cultural cognitive mechanisms, still warrants further in-depth exploration.

1.2 Target of Research

This study seeks to employ Wen Xu's (2025) concepts about cultural cognitive linguistics. However, the proposed framework is not borrowed plainly for my analysis; instead, I argue that the existing frameworks can be adapted and combined, forming a tripartite cultural cognitive framework, i.e., cultural metaphorization, cultural metonymization, and cultural framing, to analyze new discourse types and address new research problems in new contexts, i.e., in the male garment descriptions in *The Scholars*, thereby advancing a new paradigm for analyzing classical Chinese garment. Specifically, this study aims to 1) reveal cultural metaphors in garment descriptions, projecting the hidden social hierarchies and ideologies in the Ming and Qing dynasties. 2) decode cultural metonymy in specific garment delineations, triggering associations with feudal examination systems and ethical conduct. 3) activate cultural frames for literature interpretation, reflecting upon the socio-cultural context of Wu's time.

1.3 Significance of the Research

Theoretically, this study pioneers a tripartite analytical framework, thus bridging the gap between abstract cultural cognitive theories and concrete discourse analysis. By focusing on the cultural cognitive mechanism, this study has the potential to significantly deepen our understanding of how cultural symbols convey feudal social hierarchies, thus uncovering the complex but intimate interplay between language, culture, and cognition (Wen Xu, 2025) It also challenges traditional literary studies by extending its scope beyond the textual analysis, personage characteristics, plot development etc., thus offering a more holistic view of analysis of the classics. This approach breaks new ground by examining not only the linguistic components but also the cognitive elements such as cultural cognitive metaphor, metonymy, and frame, which have often been underexplored in previous studies.

Practically, this study presents a new orientation for interpreting classical Chinese literature with a focus on those rich but specific descriptions such as garments. It also has pedagogical implications for teachers to guide students how to better appreciate the cultural nuances, thereby enhancing their critical thinking about heritage preservation. Additionally, this study can facilitate cross-cultural communication especially for translators, which requires conveying not only literal meaning, but also metaphorical, metonymical features in other Chinese literature. Furthermore, the insights from this research could be used to study other satirical novels during the Ming and Qing dynasties by grasping this unique artistic technique and applying it to the creation of contemporary novels (Tang Zihui, 2017).

Literature Analysis

This chapter reviews the pertinent literature from two key fields that inform this study: the definition and classification of garments in the Ming-Qing Dynasties. With major findings of previous studies introduced and critically evaluated, the research scope for the current study will be established.

2.1 Studies on Garments in the Ming-Qing Dynasties

2.1.1 Definition of Garments

According to the *Han Yu Da Ci Dian* (*The Great Chinese Dictionary*), the term "服饰" (fúshì) has three definitions. Firstly, the ornaments for jade pendants, or decorative colors of jade artifacts. Secondly, garments and decorations. Thirdly, the practice of dressing and adorning (Cheng Jia, 2008).

Specifically, garments are referred to as "服饰" in Chinese, which can be analyzed from the perspectives of "服" and "饰". Here is the working definition in this thesis to better meet the needs of further exploration of male garments in this field: Garments or "服饰" (fúshì) consist of wearings, including headwear, bodywear, and footwear in this study, and accessories accompanying the male clothing. Despite the inclusion of female descriptions of wearings and accessories, they occupy a very limited space for discussion, which is also the reason for not covering female suits.

2.1.2 Classification of Garments

Here is the brief form of different body parts of wearings and accessories in *the Scholars*, which summarize the previous literature including Yin Zhihong (2009), Ning Feng and Wang Yangyang (2015), Chen Qun (2016), Liu Ziyun (2016) Tang Zihui (2017).

Table 2-1 Classification of Garments (combined from previous literature)

首服	方巾	纱帽	黑帽	瓦楞帽	毡帽	高帽	小帽	青衣小帽	孝帽	网巾	浩然巾	乌纱帽	草帽	僧帽	和尚帽子
主服	直裰	蟒袍(蟒衣)	补服	青衣(青布衣服)	孝服										
足服	皂靴	履(朱履、丝履)	草鞋(麻鞋、蒲鞋、芒鞋)												
配饰	金带、丝绦	扇子(诗扇、金扇)													

2.2 Status quo of Descriptions of Garments in the Ming-Qing Dynasties

In retrospect, existing scholarship on garments in the Ming and Qing Dynasties has primarily focused on such aspects as social and ritual symbolism of hearwear from Yin Zhihong (2009), with an aim to unravel the political symbolism, ethics, and symbolic system of Chinese apparel development; general textual analysis of the garments description from Yan Xiang jun (2002, 2006), and Ning Feng, Wang Yangyang (2015) with a dedication to emphasize their value or function in character portrayal, topic accentuation and realistic reflection. However, theoretical

analysis especially the cognitive exploration in explaining the male garments presentation in *the Scholars* has been marginalized in current literature. In light of this, we explore how a tripartite cultural cognitive framework established in this study will contribute to the specific analysis, which is intend to break the single-disciplinary perspectives in the previous investigation. The findings will provide valuable insights into the cognitive drivers behind male garments description, striving for elucidation the interplay between cognition, culture, and text.

Theoretical Framework

This chapter focuses on the theoretical basis of this study, which includes cultural metaphorization, cultural metonymization, and cultural framing.

3.1 Cultural Metaphorization

3.1.1 Definition of Cultural Metaphorization

Metaphor, not only seen as a mere linguistic device, but rather, the cognitive and cultural structures. It is based on both embodied and cultural experiences. Different cultures, rooted in their specific historical backgrounds, philosophical systems, and social practices, form unique metaphorical systems that shape our ways of cognition and expression towards core concepts such as life, time, feeling, and social orders (Wen Xu, 2025).

Cultural metaphorization is a cross-domain mapping process whereby abstract concepts, ethical values, and social phenomena can be made concrete and vivid through the metaphorical mechanism. For example, as for the idea "LIFE IS X", different words can be filled in this slot: JOURNEY, DRAMA, GAME, STORY, BATTLE, etc. In Chinese culture, we tend to use the image of water. We have sayings in *the Laws Divine And Human* (also known as *Tao Te Ching*): "The highest good (virtue) is like water. Water benefits everything by giving without taking or contending. It likes the low place others dislike, so it follows closely the divine law.", "Nothing in the world is softer and weaker than water, but nothing is better to win over the hard and the strong, for it cannot be replaced." etc. (Xu Yuanchong, 2012). The virtue of water aligns with the virtue of non-contention, which conforms to the divine law. In a brief conclusion, LIFE IS WATER, under the Chinese context, reflects culture-specific thought patterns and worldviews.

In this research, we'd like to offer a working definition to have further exploration in *the Scholars*. Cultural metaphorization refers to the cognitive mechanism through which sociocultural values can be projected through males' garments.

3.1.2 Garments Classification of Cultural Metaphorization

Previous literature does not equip us with operational cultural metaphorization, metonymization, and framing classification; it is thus necessary to put forward the targeted cultural metaphor, metonymy, and framing naming(s) based on the concrete texts. Through meticulous analysis, we assume that there exist three sub-categories of cultural metaphorization in the male garments descriptions: HIERARCHICAL DEMARCATION ARE GARMENT EMBLEMS, SCALE DESCENDING IS GARMENT DAMAGE, and SCALE AESCENDING IS GARMENT OPULENCE. To better explore the features of the text, the author would like to give the operational definitions initially.

Firstly, HIERARCHICAL DEMARCATION ARE GARMENT EMBLEMS means Chinese ancient officials' rank can be understood by their garment declarations. In another words, it is a cognitive mechanism by which material properties, patterns, and colors of garments are visual embodiment of officials' social hierarchies. It transforms abstract stratification into concrete/physical traits. Secondly, SCALE DESCENDING IS GARMENT DAMAGE means the disposed scale can be judged upon their garment damage situation. Its opposite situation SCALE AESCENDING IS GARMENT OPULENCE means the reversed connotation. Specifically, the two refers to a metaphorical mechanism that qualifies identity ups or downs through garment ascending or descending.

Table 3-1-2 Two Categories of Garments Classification of Cultural Metaphorization

Structure			Cognitive Principles
HIERARCHICAL DEMARCATION	ARE	GARMENT EMBLEMS	Material/pattern/color symbolizing social stratification boundaries

| SCALE DESCENDING | IS | GARMENT DAMAGE | Garments deterioration symbolizing identity devaluation |
| SCALE AESCENDING | IS | GARMENT OPULENCE | Garments enhancement symbolizing identity elevation |

(The structure "A" is "B" means "A maps B")

3.2 Cultural Metonymization

3.2.1 Definition of Cultural Metonymization

Metonomy can be defined as a cognitive process in which one cognitive category, the source, provides mental access to another cognitive category, the target, within the same domain. It is molded as the Idealized Cognitive Model (ICM) by Lakoff in 1987. Different from metaphor, which relies on the structural mappings from two domains, metonymy is dependent on the actual associations between concepts, such as part-whole, container-content, and location-institution (Wen Xu 2014).

Cultural metonymization is the conceptual process through which cultural concepts can be transferred within a single cognitive domain or ICM via contiguity relations. This enriches linguistic expressions on the one hand and embodies the reshaping functions of culture on the other. Regarding the part-whole relation, dragon bone, or "龙骨" (lóng gǔ), stands for traditional Chinese medicine. Black silk, or "青丝" (Qīng sī), stands for hair metonymically. The most famous line is from Li Bai's poem: "Do you not see the mirrors bright in chambers high, grieve over your snow-white hair though once it was silk-black?" Concerning the container-content, the inkstone, or "砚" (yàn), stands for calligraphy, which is an essential writing tool for grinding ink. Similarly, the jug or "壶" (hú) frequently serves as a metonym for wine in Chinese cultural contexts. In terms of location-institution, "梨园" (líyuán) can be literally translated as Pear Garden, metonymically denotes the operatic world, tracing back to the training community for musicians and actors established by Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty in the imperial pear orchard. These examples demonstrate the rich phenomenon of metonymy within Chinese culture, exemplifying the profound interconnection between the language and its cultural heritage. In this study, the working definition of cultural metonymization means the cognitive mechanism where garment components can activate their corresponding social order symbols or holistic image representation.

3.2.2 Garments Classification of Cultural Metonymization

As the previous section 3.1.2 has mentioned, schematizing the effective operation of garments classification of cultural metaphorization is also of great importance. Through meticulous investigation, we have found the following cultural metonymization: Garment state→Identity label, garment signs→Authoritative symbol, Garment compliance→Ethic carrier, and Accessory marks→Cultural capital.

Garment state→Identity label means an official's makeup state can activate readers' association to his identity in the ancient Ming-Qing Dynasties. Specifically, it refers to how the garment (the property) reflect his social classification (category). Garment signs→Authoritative symbols signifies the costume of an official can spark readers' cognitive connection to his authority. It is the representation of "PART FOR WHOLE" just as the saying "peering at a leopard through a bamboo tube", which means to infer the whole from a partial glimpse. Garment compliance→Ethic carrier means some headwear like "孝帽" (a hat used to wear to honor the dead in the mourning) act as a reminder to the hold ethic rituals. Through the state of wearing the specific headwear, it can be associated the reason why the character wears such a hat in that situation. Lastly, accessory marks→cultural capital means some affiliated decoration with scholars like silk fan can be served as a particular cultural capital for some community.

Table 3-2-2 Four Categories of Garments Classification of Cultural Metonymization

Structure			Cognitive Principles
Source Domain	→	Target Domain	
Garment State	→	Identity Label	PROPERTY FOR CATEGORY
Garment Signs	→	Authoritative Symbol	PART FOR WHOLE
Garment Compliance	→	Ethic Carrier	EFFECT FOR CAUSE
Accessory Marks	→	Cultural Capital	SIGN FOR POSSESSOR

(The sign "→" represents "stand(s) for" or "activate(s)")

3.3 Cultural Framing

3.3.1 Definition of Cultural Framing

Different scholars have given their definitions of frame, to name just a few:

A frame is a data structure for representing a stereotyped situation, like being in a certain kind of living room, or going to a child's birthday party (Minsky 1974:1-2). When the individual in our Western society recognizes a particular event, he tends, whatever else he does, to imply in this response (and in effect employ) one or more frameworks or schemata of interpretation of a kind that can be called primary (Goffman 1974). A frame is a mental structure that people use to understand reality and construct what we think is real; it influences our perception and behavior (Fillmore 1985). "Framing" is not primarily about politics or political messaging or communication. It is far more fundamental than that: Frames are the mental structures that allow human beings to understand reality—and sometimes to create what we take to be reality (Lakoff 2006).

We can make an observation that the concept of frame has evolved into a cognitive notion based on its timeline, which can be summarized as the following table.

Table 3-3-1 Timeline of Frame (adapted from Charles, J. Fillmore's explanations to frames)

Timeline	Content	Nature
1982:112	"Frame" is characterizing a small abstract 'scene' or 'situation', so that to understand the semantic structure of the verb it was necessary to understand the properties of such schematized scenes.	case frame
1985:86	"Frame" is any system of language choice which includes the combination of words, the grammar rules and the choice of language category.	linguistic frame
1985:223	Frames are specific unified frameworks of knowledge or coherent schematizations of experience.	cognitive frame

Based on this, it can be concluded that frame is a cognitive system or model with many elements such as related roles, attributes, relations or typical cases which are tightly associated with each other. They are an entity which means the interpretation of any of them will activate the other elements, which are easily found as they are preinstalled in humans' minds in the form of experience and beliefs.

Cultural framing refers to the frame that shapes the cognition of individuals or communities to social events, concepts, or phenomena, the way we selectively emphasize and organize information, and the process by which we choose to judge the world we are in. It plays the role of a "cultural operating system", influencing information understanding, determining the formation of cognition, attitudes, and behavior, and constituting personal and social identities to some extent. For this study, cultural framing signifies the cognitive mechanism by which garments activate socially scripted identity performances in the imperial examination context.

3.3.2 Garments Classification of Cultural Framing

While cultural metaphorization and metonymization decode how individual garments project abstract values or

underlying social orders, cultural framing operates at a systemic level by illuminating how garments trigger preexisted, tacit, or prepackaged social scripts that govern the scholars' performances. The author contends that Wu Ching-tzu masterfully deploys garments not merely as decorative elements but as cultural switches that instantaneously call forth three distinct culture-specific frames: matched frame, mismatched frame, and collapsed frame.

The author would like to give an analogy by referring to the Field Theory from Systemic Functional Linguistics in order to explain matched frame, containing three variations: field, mode, and tenor. Matched frame can be regarded as the right "Field Theory": the character does the right thing in the right situation using the right way. Specifically, the scholars wear right garments in the situation that that social environment requires with no more or less degree. The mismatched frame goes against with matched frame, which represents the disintegrated signifier-signified garment codes, where the disconnect between the clothing symbols and the wearer's identity

Table 3-3-2 Two Categories of Garments Classification of Cultural Framing

Categories	Core Logic
Matched Frame	Seamless signifier-signified garment codes aligning with social requirements or expectation
Mismatched Frame	Corrosive signifier-signified garment codes against with social requirements or expectation

3.4 Summary

In summary, this chapter introduces the definition of cultural metaphorization, cultural metonymization, and cultural framing. Table 3-1-2, 3-2-2, and 3-3-2 provide the classification of the three concepts respectively, which outlines the framework of this study.

Research Design

Based on the analysis from the literature review in Chapter Two and the theoretical framework presented in Chapter Three, this chapter will introduce three research questions and delineate the methodology for constructing the required corpus.

4.1 Research Questions

The existing scholarship on the analysis of garments descriptions of *the Scholars* has primarily focused on characteristic and social-political aspects. However, hidden mechanism through which garments are cognitively represented from the males' dressings has been marginalized in current literature. In light of this, this thesis intends to explore how cognitive perspective will contribute to the understanding of male garments beyond code symbol level and puts forward the following three research questions:

(1) What cultural metaphors, metonymies, framings are embedded in the male garment descriptions in the first thirty chapters of *The Scholars*, and how do they project the hidden social hierarchies and ideologies of the Ming and Qing dynasties?

(2) How does the framework collectively and dynamically contribute to our understanding of the interplay between language, culture, and cognition?

(3) What is the cognitive function of male garment descriptions in the first thirty chapters of *The Scholars* in terms of activating cultural frames and reflecting the socio-cultural context of Wu's time?

4.2 Research Methods

This paper uses AntConc software to cover all garments description including verbs or verbal phrases like "wear", "change", "drape", "pick", "pluck", "snatch", "seize", "wrap", "bind", "remove", "dress up", "put on", "take off" etc. to cover all situations based on KWIC. Figure 4-2 presents the number of the English text tokens collected in this thesis.

Left Context	Hit	Right Context
don't live on their inheritance; good daughters don't	wear	clothes from their own homes after they marry. I
right in our profession to wear those clothes. If you	wear	clothes like that, what can the scholars wear?" "That
of my beast of a son that I can't	wear	a real official cap.' Judging by this, a son'
about in straw sandals all summer. Yet now she will	wear	furs and be a fine lady. Fancy that!" They
But when Lou Feng saw that Chuan had nothing to	wear,	he made him a present of a light blue
for each house. The new wife insisted that she should	wear	heavy mourning, but on this point the Wang brothers
trip, and the shoes and jacket are for you to	wear	in the early morning and evening." Kuang shed tears
a scholar's* cap," he said, "but you had better	wear	it until we come to a town where you
a younger sister mourning for her elder sister should only	wear	mourning for one year — fine linen and a white
chaplet and fine scarlet costume an official's wife should	wear,	so I've made £ paper chaplet (or myself. Let
salt merchants in our yamen!" he declared. "How dare you	wear	such a cap? Take it off, officers! Tie him
If you wear clothes like that, what can the scholars	wear?" "	That was true twenty years ago," retorted Chien. "But
our host. Wan Hsueh-chai," he said. "You had better	wear	this cap and gown." They hired two sedan-chairs
Pao. "But it's not right in our profession to	wear	those clothes. If you wear clothes like that, what

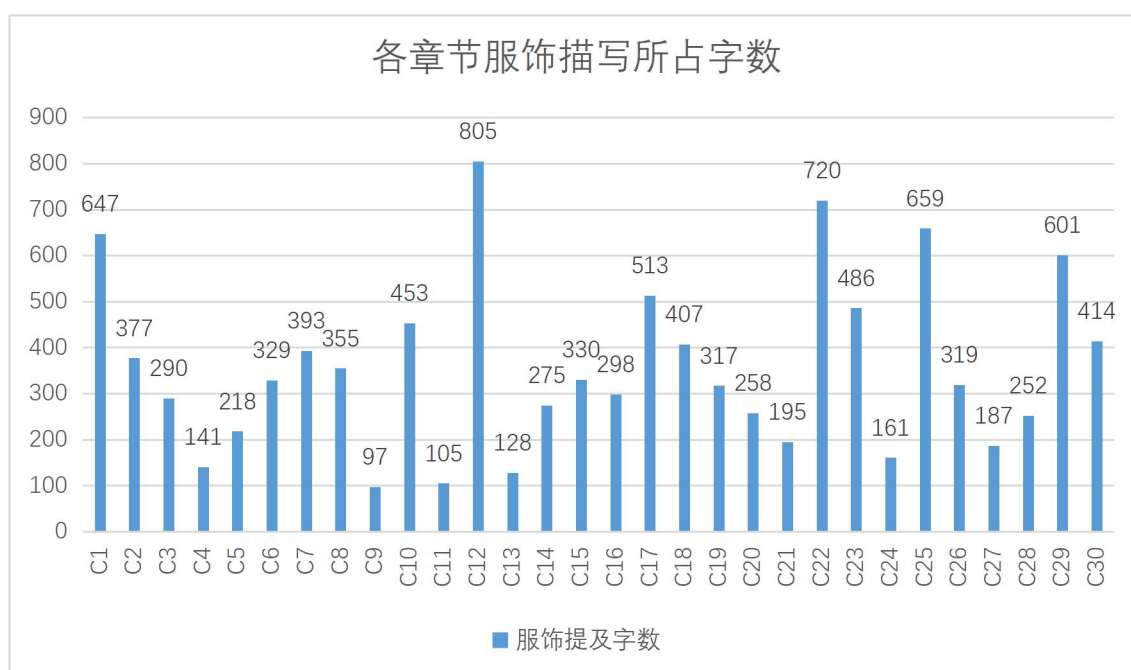Figure 4-2 The Situation of the Partial Verb "Wear" Based on KWIC

Figure 4-2 The Results of Garments Description in Each Chapter (1-30)

Research Results

This chapter is trying to use specific examples to explain how the internal relationship among cultural metaphorization, cultural Metonymization, and cultural framing dynamically works. Since headwear, bodywear, footwear and accessories won't mention separately in the original text, this paper thus chooses to analyze four elements of males' garments collectively.

5.1 Cultural Metaphorization

5.1.1 HIERARCHICAL DEMARCATION ARE GARMENT EMBLEMS

On the sixteenth the villagers sent in contributions to Shen Hsiang-fu, who prepared a feast for the new teacher to which he also invited Mei Chiu, the new scholar of the village. Mei Chiu arrived early, wearing his new square cap, but Chou Chin did not turn up till nearly noon. When dogs started barking outside, Shen Hsiang-fu went out to welcome the guest; and the villagers stared as Chou Chin came in. He was wearing an old felt cap, a tattered grey silk gown, the right sleeve and seat of which were in shreds, and a pair of shabby red silk slippers. He had a thin, dark face, and a white beard.

The imperial examination system in ancient China and the modern college entrance examination are two crucial educational and talent selection systems in Chinese history and contemporary society. There are different levels of examination ranging from Tongshi, to Xiangshi, Huishi, and finally to Dianshi. Tongshi is also known as the county examination, it was the preliminary level. Successful candidates were called "shengyuan" or "xiucai" (licentiate). Xiangshi is held at the provincial level, successful candidates were known as "juren" (recommended man) Huishi is conducted in the capital, successful candidates were referred to as "gongshi" (tribute scholars). Dianshi is the highest level of examination, conducted by the emperor himself, and successful candidates were titled "jinshi" (presented scholar). Here, Chou Chi is at the lower level than Mei Chiu even Chou is much older than Mei. Those who have passed the prefectural examination are considered senior to those who have not, regardless of age. Ming Dynasty scholars called all those who passed the prefectural examination "classmates," and those who only qualified for this examination "juniors." A young man in his teens who passed was considered senior to an unsuccessful candidate, even if the latter were eighty years old.

It is no surprising that Mei wears "a new square cap" while Chou wear an "old felt cap". This is the external representation of their hidden social ladder. The square hat can also be called the Confucian hat, which can only be worn by scholars in the Ming Dynasty, serving as a visual symbol of social ritual norms. This is conducive to representing identity and morality. Moreover, differences in material (plain black silk for scholars, gold trim for provincial graduates, and black gauze hats for imperial graduates) act as markers of social mobility, illustrating the hierarchical sequence of examination success.

5.1.2 SCALE DESCENDING IS GARMENT DAMAGE

It was a rat which had slipped from the rafters! The hot soup gave it such a fright that it knocked over the bowl as it scuttled for safety, jumping on the bridegroom's knee and smearing his red silk official gown with grease. All present were aghast. They hastily removed the dish, wiped the table clean and brought the bridegroom another gown into which to change.

In this example, Chu Hsien-fu is the bridegroom who marries Mr. Lu's daughter. In the previous description, Mr. Lu's family is rich with an old hall of an ancient mansion. However, Chu is not a real talented scholar. Here, the details in destroying the bridegroom's garment and changing of his gown act as the hidden meaning to infer that he cannot compete with and is not as good as Mr. Lu's daughter who is an intelligent girl with a good memory. Such move is an indication of his identity devalue.

5.1.3 SCALE AESCENDING IS GARMENT OPULENCE

Yang was shocked to see the state Chuan was in.

"Haven't you even got a hat?" he asked with a frown.

He made them sit down on a bench in the gate-house while he hurried in to fetch an old scholar's cap for Chuan.

"Who is this stalwart?" he inquired next.

"This is the famous Iron-armed Chang of whom I was always telling you."

In the Ming Dynasty, the society attaches great importance to wearing makeup, especially the cap as an identity identification. Chuan loses his cap, meaning he cannot give a visual code to others about the information who he is, which is the reason why Yang was shocked. Yang hastily takes the old scholar's cap for him. Chuan does not have such honor and qualification to wear this cap despite being old for he is not a scholar. He naturally wears this cap, giving tacit consent to such move to deceive the master. Such ascending can be elevated to another social ladder with voice power to some extent.

5.2 Cultural Metonymization

5.2.1 Garment state→Identity label

Mei Chiu and Hsun Mei arrived first at the temple on the morning of the feast, and were greeted by the monk. They bowed before Buddha and nodded to the monk, who said, "Congratulations, Mr. Hsun, on becoming a scholar! This is a reward for all the good deeds your worthy father did to the glory of Buddha. You were just a child, with your hair in tufts, when you studied here."

Chapter7 Page 79

The Chinese translation version of "Congratulations, Mr. Hsun, on becoming a scholar!" is "恭喜荀小相公，而今挣了这一顶头巾", which is not literally translated as things like "...earn this square cap". This is for the fact that square is an entry ticket for a normal person to become a scholar. This approach in translating such cultural metonymization (Garment state→Identity label) is based on the rules operating in the Ming Dynasty. Here, the square cap is not merely a normal garment, but the consensus regulated by the strict rituals. The monk's words can be interpreted as such cognitive mechanism: the attire codes directly map the abstract social identity. This cultural metonymization is deeply rooted at the mandatory of Ming Dynasty's garment system.

5.2.2 Garment signs→Authoritative symbol

On the third day the Lou family sent scores of bearers with gold, silver, pearls. emeralds, jewelry, silk, embroidery, sheep, wine and fruit as gifts for the bride's family. And after these presents had been dispatched they gave each go-between twelve taels of silver for new clothes and four taels of silver for wine and fruit.

Chapter10 Page118-119

This example describes the situation that Lou family presents gifts to the Lu's family. The details like "scores of bearers with gold, silver, pearls. emeralds, jewelry, silk, embroidery" exemplifies the cultural cognitive metonymy mechanism. "蟒纹" or bearers with gold, silver are by no means ordinary finery. Through the Ming Dynasty's strict costume regulations, they are metonymized as markers of specific political status and bureaucratic rank. We can interpret such move as the following messages: The Lou families were not merely giving luxurious textiles but using the specific political symbols borne by the garments as a part to represent and convey the entirety of the Lu family's bureaucratic status, privileges, and social prestige. The garment here transcends mere ornamentation; it becomes a condensed, visual code of power, its value far exceeding the material realm and transforming into a concrete symbol of the Lu family's superior authority. In summary, these presents, especially the garments, are both a precise recognition and deliberate accommodation of the Lu family's exalted status and a public declaration of the impending political alliance through the sartorial codes within the betrothal gifts.

5.2.3 Garment compliance→Ethic carrier

Reading the summons from the nether world as he lay in bed, Old Pu knew that his time had come. He immediately called his two sons and their wives to his side to say a few last words to them and describe what he had just seen.

"Dress me quickly in my funeral clothes 1" he said. "I am going to my last rest." Pu Cheng and Pu Hsin wept as they hastily brought the burial clothes and put them on him.

"I'm glad my old friend and I are on the same list," he muttered. "He is the first and I am the last. He has stolen a march on me, but I shall overtake him!"

Chapter22 Page239

This example shows that burial or the mourning garments are not simply the shrouds. In Chinese history, we have the sacredness of traditional funeral rites, which are metonymized as a concrete representation of Confucian ethical principles and the ultimate order of life. We have such saying "Crowns rectify life; garments rectify death" to describe the meaning of the garment when a person at the dying time. When Old Pu, upon receiving the summons from the underworld, immediately instructs his son to "dress him quickly in his funeral clothes", representing his

complete observance of life's ethical order to achieve a "dignified death".

5.2.4 Accessory marks→Cultural capital

From the chair alighted a man in a scholar's cap and sapphire-blue gown, who was holding a white paper fan, with a poem on it, from which hung a square ivory seal. Followed by a servant carrying a medicine chest, this man was about to enter a house, when Ching called to him: "Dr. Chao! I haven't seen you for a long time! Where are you going?"

Chapter17 Page194

This example is to describe the scholarly accessories accompanying Doctor Zhao's image. The details of the "a white paper poetry fan" and the "square ivory seal" show the cultural cognitive metonymy mechanism. Theses accessories are far from ordinary personal items; but tangible carriers of scholarly cultivation, artistic taste, and social prestige, collectively representing his complete cultural capital as a renowned physician and distinguished scholar.

5.3 Cultural Framing

5.3.1 Matched Frame

(When Magistrate Hsiang opened the commissioner's letter he was amazed and hastily ordered his men to open the gate of his house and invite Mr. Pao in, going out himself to welcome him.) Pao Wen-ching came in, in a black gown and small cap, and knelt to pay his respects.

Chapter24 Page269

This example is from the 24th chapter of *the scholar*, depicting Pao Wen-ching meets the Magistrate Hsiang. "青衣小帽" is translated as "a black gown" and "小帽" is "small cap". They are the normal person's garments with nothing special. However, Mr. Pao is praised by the Magistrate Hsiang, which means Mr. Pao should wear something honorable or glorious to show their intimacy. Mr. Pao still chooses his original attire for the fact that he knows the whole social frame with no permission to transcend the boundary, depicting a humble image. He sticks his moral standards.

5.3.2 Mismatched Frame

Hsun Mei was about to send in a petition asking to go home (or the period of mourning, when Wang said: "Think it over. It will soon be time for the appointment of officers, and we both stand a good chance; but if you announce your mourning you will have to go home and wait for another three years. Wouldn't that be a pity? Better hush this up until after the appointment." "You are a real friend," said Hsun. "But I don't see how this can be hidden." "Quickly order the man from your home to take off his mourning, and forbid him to let outsiders know of this. Tomorrow morning I will see what I can do."

Chapter7 Page85

This is the contrary example compared with the matched frame example. As we mentioned in the 5.2.3, if one of the elder family members passed away, son or daughter must go home to serve the mourning rituals and wear funeral clothes to show observance of life's ethical order. However, Wang tempted Mei to conceal the mourning fact because he wants to take advantage of Mei's fame, talent, resource, and relationship to go a higher social ladder. He shouldn't forbid outsiders to take off the mourning garments not to let others know such case, which violates the moral code in the Ming Dynasty. Mei should have not accepted such advice, but according to the following plot "That evening Hsun Mei changed into a blue gown and a small cap, and went secretly to beg his two teachers, Vice-President Chou and Examiner Fan, to recommend him; and they both thought this might be arranged.", he changes his makeup into a gown and a small cap, which is the normal person's suite. His action is trying not to call other's attention, which is not suitable to his identity. We can see that in these two situation, the characters break the social frame by saying or doing corresponding words or deeds.

Discussion

This chapter is trying to schematize a modal to analyze the dynamic relationship among cultural

metaphorization, cultural metonymization, and cultural framing. Since headwear, bodywear, footwear and accessories won't mention separately in the original text, this paper thus chooses to analyze four elements of males' garments collectively. Additionally, we have analyzed functions of males' garments in the following aspects: depicting characters' profile, pushing plot development, accentuating satire topic.

6.1 Dynamic Working Mechanism of the Three Frameworks

Through meticulous investigation using specific examples, this study is intended to build such a modal in figure 3-4 to unravel the underlying operational mechanism about the relationship among cultural metaphorization, cultural metonymization, and cultural framing. We have found that cultural framing is at the external place, which can map the next level of analysis either cultural metaphorization (the right side) or cultural metonymization (the left side) or both in some specific exmaples. Since the above modal is an initial and tentative symbol, we will use specific examples to verify.

Figure 3-4 A modal of Internal Relationship among Cultural Metaphorization, Cultural Metonymization, and Cultural Framing
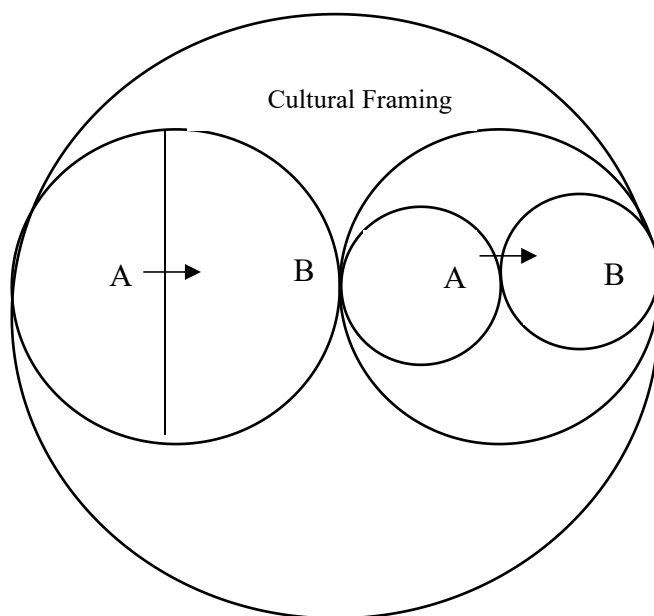
Example One:

Wang Mien had genius. While still in his teens, he mastered the whole field of astronomy, geography, the classics and history. He was, however, eccentric. He did not look for an official post, and did not even have any friends. All day he studied behind closed doors; and when he saw in an edition of the poems of Chu Yuan a picture of the poet's costume, he made himself a very high hat and a loose flowing gown. In the fresh and flowering spring he would take his mother out in a buffalo cart, and, dressed in his high hat and loose gown, flourishing the whip and singing songs, would drive all over the countryside and around the lake. Small groups of village children would tag after him, laughing; but he did not mind them.

Chapter 1, Page 5

Wang Mien is the first character in this book. In this case, Wang Mien's garments are not restricted by the social norms, thus constituting the mismatched frame. He refused to follow the currents that most scholars pursue. His act of wearing a tall hat and loose robes completely deviated from the norms of Ming Dynasty clothing as hierarchical symbols—he rejected the imperial examination, breaking the metonymic chain of "square scarf" mapping "official rank" but imitated Qu Yuan's clothing from the previous Chu Dynasty. This conflict between individual symbolic

practice and the social framework creates an ironic tension.

6.2 Cognitive Functions in the Male Description Garments the Scholars

6.2.1 Depicting Characters' Profile

Now it had been raining heavily for two days and, although the rain had stopped, the ground was still wet; so the players in their new boots had to make a detour as they entered from the courtyard.

Chapter10 Page120

This detail indirectly depicts that the master is meticulous person. Even if the rain just stopped and the ground was still wet, the players employed by the master still were in their new boots when entering from the courtyard. This is the embodiment of character's profile. To make the wedding ceremony graceful and refined, the maser does not spend less money to stay within budget, showing the master is the rich man at the same time.

6.2.2 Pushing Plot Development

The two brothers were wearing official robes and the go-betweens auspicious dress. Mr. Lu, in gauze cap and embroidered gown, satin shoes and gold belt, came out to welcome them, bowing as he invited them to ascend the steps. Then the musicians and sixteen lantern-bearers ushered in Chu Hsien-fu. In gauze cap and official gown, he was wearing flowers and had red silk over his shoulders.

Chapter10 Page119

The elaboration of garments of different characters in this paragraph employs a masterful narrative technique, functioning on multiple levels to propel the plot.

To begin with, it establishes a dissonant or inharmonious tone or melody through official robes "gauze cap and embroidered gown". Such auspicious dresses, and lavish lanterns and candles, which elevates readers' original expectations. This artfully crafted but superficial perfection will starkly contrast with the subsequent chain of slapstick misfires (the rat plunging into the soup because of the servant's disastrous blunder), creating an unexpected effect that renders these accidents absurdly conspicuous and directly fuels Mr. Lu's foreboding sense of inauspiciousness, casting an immediate shadow over the marriage. Moreover, the garments reveal character and foreshadow tragedy. Mr. Lu's insistence on wearing his full official attire even for his daughter's wedding at home, visually embodies his core identity as a bureaucrat obsessed with official rank and prestige, not a father. This sartorial choice directly indicates his future demand that his son-in-law should pursue the hierarchical examinations, laying the groundwork for the couple's ideological conflict. Meanwhile, Chu Hsien-fu's passive role as a well-dressed "puppet groom" in his red silk official gown hints at his powerlessness within arranged familial and social structures.

6.2.3 Accentuating Satire Topic

In the tea-shop he saw a man in a tall hat, sapphire-blue gown and black shoes with white soles, drinking tea alone. Going closer, Pao saw that it was Pock-marked Chien, who played old men's parts in his company.

…

"That's not what I meant," countered Pao. "But it's not right in our profession to wear those clothes. If *you* wear clothes like that, what can the scholars wear?"

…

As Pock-marked Chien dealt him a blow, laughing, the waiter brought them cakes. While they were eating, an old man walked in leaning upon a dragon-head stick. He was wearing a hood, a dark purple silk gown and black shoes with white soles.

Chapter24 Page271-272

From the previous chapter, we have known that during the Ming and Qing dynasties, regulated garment laws were one of important means in maintaining the feudal hierarchical order. A person's attire, including color, material, style, pattern, strictly reflects their social status. Items like The outfit like "black shoes with white soles", "sapphire-blue gown" were reserved for those who had earned scholarly honors or held official positions.

Qian is an opera performer, ranking at the lower position and enjoy very low social status. His wearing does not conform to his level, which is against the garment regulation, thus transgressing orthodox status. Qian just imitates the "form" rather than the "substance", exposing a widespread societal value dislocation that people worshipped the external symbols of power and status rather than their inherent knowledge and virtue.

On the other side, Pao doesn't see anything wrong with the system at all; instead, he consciously and sincerely defends it, believing that he and his peers are unworthy. This is more tragic and satirical than having a scholar-official deliver the criticism—it reveals the horror of ideological imprisonment, how people can be tamed by the system into self-enslavement.

Conclusions

This paper has explored the how cultural metaphorization, cultural metononymization, and cultural framing be analyzed through specific examples in *the scholars* with a particular focus on how the internal dynamic mechanism is contributed to the overall operation. This study has provided a fine-grained examination of the functions of garment in three aspects. This chapter summarizes the major findings, implications, and limitations of the study.

6.1 Major Findings

One key finding is that cultural metaphorization, cultural metononymization, and cultural framing are effective in analyzing Chinese tradition classics. This paper adopts new perspective lens in examining garments. Specifically speaking, we extract three cultural metaphorization: HIERARCHICAL DEMARCATION ARE GARMENT EMBLEMS, SCALE DESCENDING IS GARMENT DAMAGE, and SCALE AESCENDING IS GARMENT OPULENCE. As for cultural metononymization, this paper concludes four mapping processes: Garment state→Identity label, Garment signs→Authoritative symbol, Garment compliance→Ethic carrier, and Accessory marks→Cultural capital. Additionally, cultural framing includes matched and mismatched ones.

Through separate analysis, this paper finds the internal operation logic among cultural metaphorization, cultural metononymization, and cultural framing. Cultural framing, no matter matched or mismatched one, can trigger or map the happenings of cultural metaphorization or cultural metononymization, or both, which is dependent on the specific context and garment descriptions.

6.2 Implications

Methodologically, this paper encourages future studies to build specific corpus to pay attention to micro levels of the text, instead of focusing on macro narratives. Practically, this thesis this paper advices researchers to adopt cultural cognitive perspectives to analyze Chinese culture classics, which is a new trend for traditional culture text decoding. What's more, it is suggested to explore the inner relationship of specific text like gradual mapping mechanism as this paper has found. Lastly, we expect future studies can conclude the specific pattern or paradigm of cultural metaphorization, cultural metononymization, and cultural framing, which is not universal to some extent.

6.3 Limitations and Prospects for Future Research Development

This study is limited in the following aspects. First, given the complexity of our whole book's data, we only pick the first thirty chapter as the sample to analyze. A full-text analysis enables an examination of the interaction between the framework we have established and can be concluded a comprehensive picture of *the scholars*. Additionally, our corpus has been limited to culture-loaded description of garments, qualitative analysis is required in the cultural classics. Finally, we limit the comparative discussion to English classics to validate the uniqueness of Chinese classics. An extended research of cross-cultural classics dialogue can provide further insights.

References

[1] Berlin, B. & P. Kay. 1969. *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution* [M]. Berkeley: University of California Press.

[2] Evans, V, & Green, M. 2006. *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction*. [M] Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

[3] Fillmore, C. J. 1977. *Topics in lexical semantics*. In R.W. Cole, ed., Current Issue in Linguistic Theory. Bloomington, London: Indiana University Press. 59-81.

[4] Fillmore, C. J. 1982. Frame Semantics. *The Linguistic Society of Korea*. In Linguistics in the Morning Calm. Soeul: Hanshin.

[5] Kövecses, Z. 2015. *Where Metaphors Come From* [M]. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[6] Lakoff, G. & M. Johnson.1980. *Metaphors We Live By* [M]. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

[7] Levinson, S. C. 2003. *Space in Language and Cognition: Explorations in Cognitive Diversity* [M]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[8] Palmer, G. B. 1996. *Towards a Theory of Cultural Linguistics* [M]. Austin: University of Texas Press.

[9] Sharifian, F. 2017a. *Cultural Linguistics* [M]. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

[10] Wierzbicka, A. 2010. *English: Meaning and Culture* [M]. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

[11] Wen Xu & Chen Chuanhong. 2021. *Cultural Conceptualisations of the Loong in Chinese Idioms* [J]. Review of Cognitive linguistics (2): 567-593.

[12] Lu Xun．2006. *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*．[M] Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House.

[13] Chen Meilin．2014. *Chen's Commentary on Unofficial History of the Scholars* [M] Beijing: The Commercial Press.

[14] Wen Xu. 2024, 40 (05): 1-16. *An Exploration of Cultural Cognitive Linguistics* [J] Foreign Languages and Literature (bimonthly).

[15] Wen Xu. 2025, (03): 1-10 *Cultural Cognitive Linguistics Revisited* [J] Journal of Zhejiang International Studies University.

[16] Zhou Qian. 2025, 44 (06), 140-142. *Exploration of the limits of translatability in costume culture terminology through English translation of The Unofficial History of the Scholars* [J] FangZhi Report.