Metaphorical Expressions about Houses in Japanese and English

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This paper is based on two crucial assumptions. First, human-beings in general have a metaphorical way of thinking. The assumption has been clearly stated by Johnson when he defines metaphor as "a pervasive mode of understanding by which we project patterns from one domain of experience in order to structure another domain of a different kind. So conceived, metaphor *is* not merely a linguistic mode of expression; rather it is one of the chief cognitive structures by which we are able to have coherent, ordered experiences that we can reason about and make sense of. Through metaphor, we make use of patterns that obtain in our physical experience to organize our more abstract understanding." (Johnson 1987: xv)

The second assumption, which may be called a weak Sapir Whorfian hypothesis, is that cultural and cognitive differences are, to some extent, reflected in the respective languages of human-beings. Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and Lakoff (1987), for instance, have a similar idea. The latter expresses the idea as follows:

> The two studies that I have found sufficiently detailed to be convincing to me are the studies of the general principles governing the use of spatial location terms in Cora (by Casad) and Mixtec (by Brugman). Tamly's study of Atsugewi (Tamly 1977) is also sobering in this regard. Such detailed empirical studies have convinced me in a way that Whorf's cursory studies did not, that these languages differ from English and from each other in the way they conceptualize spatial location. These differences are largely differences in conceptual organization. (Lakoff 1987: 33)

Of the first assumption, it will be shown that human beings in general focus on various features of a thing in building metaphorical expressions. To put it in more detail, the generation of metaphorical expressions is related to a way of thinking by which human-beings focus on some part or characteristic of a certain entity. This way of thinking may be said to be metonymical and synecdochical, or more generally metaphorical. Besides, it will be demonstrated that the characteristics of a concrete entity are projected in theory and argument building. Although Lakoff and Johnson (1980) has

already clarified on this point citing examples in English, it will be shown that it is the case also in Japanese.

Of the second assumption, it will be asserted that traditional characteristics of a thing and its users are reflected in metaphorical expressions. Consequently, it will be claimed that metaphorical expressions of each language inherit traditional and cultural aspects of an entity. This idea will be demonstrated by analyzing some expressions about houses and homes in English and Japanese.

The first example of a difference in metaphorical expressions about some parts of a house can be attributed to differences in the structural characteristics of traditional Japanese houses, as compared to Occidental ones. It is the pillars that function in supporting the load in a traditional timber-framed Japanese house, whereas it is the brick and block walls that bear the load in an Occidental house. This difference is still reflected in both languages, and especially in metaphorical expressions.

A second difference is in the frequency and manner of the metaphorical uses of the term door in English as compared to the term to in Japanese which arises from a disparity in the concept of the inside and the outside of a house. In traditional Japan, a house and a yard were usually surrounded with a wall or a fence. The boundary between the inside and the outside of the house was, therefore, not the door, but the wall or fence with a gate as an entrance. On the contrary, in America, the boundary seems to be an outer wall of the house with a door as an entrance. It will be indicated that that is the main reason for the difference in the frequency of occurrence between the term door and the corresponding Japanese expression to as a metaphor.

Third, the functional difference of the rooms in a house in each area contributes to the formation of metaphorical models of Japanese and Occidental houses. It will be classified that these models are formed focusing on the contrast between the functional clarity of the rooms in an Occidental house and the functional vagueness of the tatami mat-rooms in a Japanese traditional style house.

Finally, studying some metaphorical uses of the terms house and home in English and those of the corresponding expressions in Japanese, as well as studying how house and home are compared to other things, it will be shown that human beings have some metaphorical or metonymical ways of thinking.

1. TIMBER-FRAMED-HOUSE VS. MASONRY HOUSE

1.1 Foundation, Framework, and Outer Shell

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), in English, terms of parts of a building which are often used in argument and theory building are those related to the foundation, framework, and outer shell. The words expressing these parts frequently occur in Japanese as well. The following are some of the examples.

(l) ...beikonriron wa wareware no shoomeishiuru mono dewa naku,
(Bacon's theory) (we) (not to be able to prove)
koodoo no dodai ni suru shurui no mono de...
(of action) (foundation) (to be used) (a kind of) (thing)
(Karatani 1983: 39)
(Bacon's theory is not the one we can prove whether it is true or not, but it is the one which can be the foundation for deciding whether we should take action or not.)

(2) The rumour was completely without foundation. *(LDCE)*

(3) Hatarakuonna ni totte, jibunshugi o toosuni wa...
(for working women) (to be independent as an individual)
shakai no naka de tsukurareta waku o kuzusanaito
(in the society) (to be made) (framework) (to break down)
jitsugen dekinai.
(to be not realized) (*Shukan Asahi*, January 6, 1989, p. 36)
(For working women to be independent as an individual..., they have to break down the social fabric (lit. framework) dominated by men)

(4) This is due to the fact that the people who make speeches there have not begun to break through the confines of the way of thinking of those who were raised within the framework of Tokugawa Confucianism. (Kenny 1989: 69)

The prominent difference between English and Japanese is that, in Japanese, the term hashira 'pillar' occurs more frequently as a metaphorical expression, meaning 'an important element' or 'an important supporter' like in (5) to (7). On pillar or post, Lakoff and Johnson didn't mention anything in their hook.

(5) Gendai no nihon no jooshikide wa kafucho wa
(according to the present-day common sense in Japan) (patriarch)
daikokubashira ni suerare saishi wa
(central post) (to be considered) (his wife and children)
sono daikokubashira ni hogosareteiru to kangaerareteiru
(that) (central post) (to be protected) (to be thought)
ga jitsu wa sono gyaku.
(but) (in fact) (the reverse is the case)
(Nishinihon-Shinbun, January 15, 1988)
(In Japan, until quite recently, the father of a family was considered to be the most important supporter and breadwinner (lit. a central post), but nowadays the situation has been changing. Father is supported and helped by his wife and children.)

(6) Zaitaku-saabisu no yonbonbashira to sareru

(of the service at home) (four pillars) (to be regarded)
kyuushoku nyuuyoku hoomu-herupu
(food delivery) (taking a bath) (helping at home)
hoomon-kango...
(visiting home for nursing)
(*Asahi-Shinbun* , September 5, 1987)
(Four of the especially important things to do (lit. four Pillars) for senior citizens at home alone are food delivery, helping them to take a bath...)

(7) Nihon no keizakiseichou no shichuu deraru
(of Japan's economic growth) (to be a supporting post)
kokumin no kinben-sa...
(the nation's) (diligence) *(Chunichi-Shinbun,* January 4. 1989)
(The nation's diligence has contributed to the economic growth of Japan. Lit. "the nation's diligence is one of the supporting posts for the economic growth of Japan.")

The frequent use of the term hashira and its variants like daikokubashira, standing for the most important supporter of the family, may be attributed to the fact that a traditional Japanese house was a timber-framed-house, the load of which was supported by the principal post. It may, therefore, be claimed that a traditional building method is reflected in this point. Further cases will be investigated where, presumably, some images of traditional things are still alive in metaphors.

1.2 Kabe and Wall

The term wall in English, as well as the corresponding expression kabe in Japanese, is used metaphorically, meaning a 'barrier', like in (8) and (9). But a major difference between them is that the term wall in English can co-occur with the verb protect like in (10), whereas the term kabe in Japanese cannot be so used. Besides, the term wall can be used metaphorically in a context like (11), in which the Japanese corresponding expression cannot. These facts show that the term wall in English sometimes has a positive connotation, which kabe in Japanese does not.

(8) Recent news reports refer to the "great wall" and the "glass ceiling" that they must break through to achieve managerial success.
(*The Japan Times,* September 6, 1988)

(9) Indeed, within science, hidden behind walls of jargon far more impenetrable than any sociologist would ever dare to erect, there is often plurality and fierce controversy. (Bernarde 1988: 79)

(10) The higher the style level, the more walls there are to protect the addressee against the encroachment that any communication inevitably makes on privacy.
(Hudson 1980: 127)

(11) Close inspection of the Reagan-Gorbachev process shows major cracks are already visible in the walls of this most recent U.S.-Soveit reconciliation.
(Newsweek, May 30, 1988, P.4)

The term kabe in Japanese, on the other hand, is always used metaphorically with a connotation of a negative evaluation like in (12) to (14), though the term appears almost every day in newspapers and magazines.

(12) Hito wa ittshoo no uchi ni ikutsuka no kabe ni
(people) (in the course of life) (many) (walls)
tsukiataru. Sono kabe ga atsui ka usui ka wa
(bump into) (these walls) (whether they are thick or thin)
hito sorezore de chigau ga jidai ni yotte
(depending on a person) (differ) (but) (depending on the times)
kotonaru de aroo.
(will be different) *(Inner Trip,* December, 1988)
(Every man and women will have to fight against some barriers (lit. walls) in the course of life. Some may be very high and not easy to overcome, and others may be rather low and easy to overcome. Whether we can surmount them or not depends on the times in which we are living.)

(13) Fujin-shuukai de itsumo mondai ni naruno wa
(at a women's meeting) (every occasion) (to be problematical)
otoko-shakai no kabe no atsusa da.
(the society controlled by men) (wall) (thickness)
(*Asahi-Shinbun* , May 23, 1988)
(At a women's gathering, one of the topics which have been always discussed is an extreme difficulty in overcoming the barrier created by a male controlled society in Japan.)

(14) Dansei wa... josei no yooni shakaitekina kabe ni
(males) (like women) (social) (walls)
habamareru taiken ga sukunai.
(to be obstructed) (to have few experiences)
(*Nikkei-Shinbun*, May 23, 1988)
(Men, unlike women, had few experiences of having been obstructed by social barriers (lit. walls).

This claim is further strengthened by the fact that the term kabe cannot be used in the contexts corresponding to (10) and (11).

It may be claimed that the difference between English and Japanese is caused by that of the method by which a house is built in each area. Traditionally, walls in Europe and America were built by piling up bricks and blocks, and the thick walls had an important function for supporting the load of a masonry house. The prominent feature

may be attributed to the frequent metaphorical use of the term wall, focusing on both positive and negative aspects of walls. In a Japanese timber-framed-house, on the other hand, walls were not as important as those in Europe and America, since they did not have a function for supporting the load of a roof. In addition, a different kind of wall, by which a traditional Japanese retainer's house and yard was usually surrounded, can be regarded as the boundary between the inside and the outside of the house, as will be discussed in Section 2. Thus, the wall not allowing outsiders to intrude inside the house has led the Japanese to have a strongly negative image of the term wall. Therefore, it may be understood that the difference in the structural characteristics of a house is, again, reflected in the disparate behavior of the metaphorical uses of the term wall and kabe.

1.3 Building Materials

The terms expressing some building materials of a masonry house, like brick, block, mortar, and cement, often occur metaphorically in English, as is described in Lakoff and Johnson (1980). In linguistics, for instance, Lakoff and Johnson have criticized what is called 'componential analysis of meaning' as a 'building block theory.' In the same book and also in Langacker (1987), furthermore, formal semantics like Montague grammar is stigmatized as 'building block theory/metaphor.' Not confined to only linguistics, these words are used frequently, as in (15) to (17).

(15) Parents who specify that they prefer a boy (or a girl) are one brick short of a full load. (*AEN*, September 15, 1988) [1]

(16) Now come indications that Japan is ahead in developing many of the building blocks of 21st century technology. *(Time,* January 1988)

(17) A third common metaphor of enduringness MARRIAGE IS A DURABLE BOND BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE also appears in one passage under analysis. The secureness of this bond is often reflected in metaphors picturing married couples a "cemented together", "bound together"... (Quinn 1987: 176)

A Japanese anthropologist has, moreover, defined the American way of thinking as a 'building block method' (lit. building brick method).

Nevertheless, in Japanese, the corresponding terms hardly appear as metaphors. The reason is that no bricks, blocks, cement, and mortar were used in building a house in Japan. Timbers like wood posts were essential material for the house building. The frequent use of the term hashira 'pillar' may be attributed to the property too, as well as its structural importance. Therefore, it may be asserted, again, that the difference of the building methods and materials is reflected in the way metaphors of building materials occur in English and Japanese.

1.4 **Summary for this section**

In this section, it can be shown that the traditional way of building a house in each area is well reflected in the characteristic behavior of metaphorical expressions in English and Japanese.

In English, for example, it has been found that some of the characteristic ways of building a brick house are still inherited in metaphorical expressions, while some features of a timber-framed-house supported by a principal post still remain in metaphors of the Japanese language. This leads us to the conclusion that languages, especially their metaphors, conservatively inherit the traditional culture and technology in their respective communities, and this fact may influence some of the ways of thinking of the people in each language speaking community. Therefore, hypotheses claimed in Lakoff (1987: 334) would seem to be operating at least for the metaphorical expressions discussed so far.

2. DOOR AND TO

The frequent use of the term door as a metaphor is observed in English. It stands for a 'means of access to something', like in (18).

(18) Literature and cognition are doors into each other: literature leads us into questions about human understanding, and the study of the human mind turns wisely for clues to the oldest and most abiding arts.
(Turner 1987: 11)

In President Bush's Inaugural Address, moreover, the term door occurs four times, as is cited in (19).

(19) But this is a time when the future seems a door you can walk right through—into a room called tomorrow. Great nations of the world are moving toward democracy—through the door to freedom. Men and women of the world move toward free market—through the door to prosperity. The people of the world agitate for free expression and free thought, through the door to moral and intellectual satisfactions that only liberty allows.
(Bush Inaugural Address, from *The Japan Times)*

Besides, the term door is able to stand for 'house' or 'home' synecdochically. Although the expression next door is a typical example of this kind, other instances are found like in (20).

(20) Julia was writing down what they saw on their "awareness walk." She noted the offending addresses, located only few doors from the intersection of Ryston's streets. *(Reader's Digest* May, 1988)

The corresponding expressions to the term door like to and tobira in Japanese, on the other hand, are seldom used synecdochically and metaphorically. Especially, the term to has no metaphorical or synecdochical use, though its allomorph with the classical Chinese pronunciation ko sometimes occurs in counting the number of houses like in

ikko 'one house', zenko. 'all houses', etc. As for tobira as it is found in the translation of Bush's Inaugural Address in the Japanese newspapers, it is sometimes used with a similar meaning to the term door. The term, however, doesn't appear as frequently in materials written originally in Japanese as the term door in English does. The only example I have found is in (21).

(21) Keshigomu-nage wa Tarookun ga gakkoo de
(throwing a fragment of an eraser) (Taroo) (in school)
miseta hajimete no jikohyooji. Kataku tozasareteita
(showed) (first) (self expression) (tightly closed)
tobira ga honnowazuka hirakareta to
(door) (slightly) (to be opened)
kaishaku dekinai deshooka.
(it might be presumed)
(*Asahi-shinbun gakugeibu* (ed.) 1984: 14)
((About an autistic child) Throwing a fragment of an eraser is the first behavior by means of which Taro showed his presence in class. This action might be regarded as an indication that he is at last opening the tightly closed door to his mind.)

Incidentally, the term mon in Japanese, which approximately corresponds to the term gate in English, is more frequently used metaphorically than the terms to and tobira as in (22).

(22) Shoosetsu to iu haruka tooku no mon o mezashite
(what is called a 'novel') (far away) (gate) (aiming at)
kaitekita kai wa atta.
(to have been writing) (to be grateful)
(Chunichi-Shinbun, January 14. 1989)
(I am grateful for winning this prize for literature, since I have been writing novels aiming to be a full-fledged novelist (lit. aiming at a far away gate, though to be one is not easy.)

Now, let us consider why in Japanese the term mon as a metaphor occurs more often that the terms to and tobira, while the term door is frequently used as a metaphor in English. The reason may be attributed to the difference in the Japanese concept of the inside and the outside of a house from that of the U.S.A. Traditionally, in Japan, the site of a house and yard was usually surrounded with a wall or a board fence which has a gate to go in and out. Thus, the boundary between the inside and the outside was a fence or wall with a gate as an entrance, not the outer walls of the house. The gate, therefore, has a very important function as an entrance to the inside, which was bound to have a very symbolic prominence. To, on the other hand, wasn't an entrance to the inside. Besides, the term to is a superordinate term of various kinds of doors and windows, like

hikido (a sliding door), amado (a door protecting a house and the persons inside from storms and winds), etc. It is, therefore, not a basic word in Rosch's sense. For this reason, it may be presumed that the term doesn't have such symbolic prominence, and consequently it is seldom used as a metaphorical expression. As for an American house and the yard, they seldom have a fence or wall around them, and so the boundary between the inside and the outside is usually the walls of the house with a front door as an entrance, in spite of the existence of a yard with a lawn, as is described in Taki (1983), Makino (1980), etc. The door in English, therefore, has a meaning of an 'entrance', as well as that of the door itself. Therefore, door can have a very symbolic image for Americans.

Consequently. it may be concluded that the different behavior of the terms in this domain can be explained by the disparity in a concept of the interior space and the exterior space between American people and Japanese people.

3. METAPHORS OF HOUSE AND HOME

If an Englishman's home is his castle, it may be said that a Japanese's home is his rabbit hutch. In any case, one of the main themes to be claimed in this section is that various kinds of metaphors are created basing on metonymical and synecdochical way of thinking. The metaphor, rabbit hutch, for example, is formed metonymically focusing on the attribute of the poorness and smallness of Japanese city dwellers' houses.

In this section, only two main aspects of the metaphor of house and home will be discussed. The first one is how house and home are likened to other things. The other is how the disparity between Occidental and Japanese houses is explained with metaphorical models.

As for metaphorical expressions in which a house or home is compared to other things, the expressions are created based on various kinds of attributes of a house, as well as by focusing on those who live in it. There are container metaphors like a little white box, and kazoku/jinsei no iremono (a container for life/ a family), a machine metaphor (like a machine for living), and what may be called a haven metaphor (like shelter, haven, retreat, castle, fortress, etc.) both in English and Japanese. A house or home is, furthermore, likened to a ship in which a family spend their life, since we have a concept LIFE IS A JOURNEY/VOYAGE. Besides, a house or home is compared to a stage or theater, like in 'A home is a stage for the display of affluence', focusing on some period of a life journey. Almost all of these metaphors occur both in English and Japanese, not only because of greatly increasing international cultural exchanges, but also, perhaps because of our universal cognitive abilities as human beings. Expressions which are thought to be used only in Japanese are quite few. Among them are unagi no nedoko (lit. an eel's bed), which means a very narrow house, and furoshiki (lit. a Japanese style cloth wrapper), used to refer to a traditional Japanese house.

Incidentally, in almost all cases, these metaphors are formed focusing on some

attributes of house and home, and of people who live in them, as is mentioned above. Besides, there are cases where some part of a house is used to represent the house itself synecdochically, like the term roof in the expression to live under the same roof, To generalize from these facts, it may be claimed that we human beings seem to have metonymical and synecdochical ways of thinking.

The next point I'd like to discuss is how Japanese scholars analyze Japanese and Occidental houses with metaphorical models, and what kind of conclusions are drawn.

Ueda (1974) and Taki (1980) have defined a Japanese house type as that of a 'theater', while an Occidental one is defined as a 'museum type'. The distinction is made on the basis of the way rooms are used in Japan, and in Europe and America.

In a typical Japanese house, a room may be used in such a flexible way as to be used as a place for receiving some guests during the day, while it may also become a bedroom at night. One room is, therefore, used with more than one function like the stage in a theater. Taking this property into consideration, Ueda and Taki claim that a typical Japanese house belongs to a 'theater type'.

On the other hand, they regard an European and American type of house as that of a 'museum', since in the hall or living room, there are lots of portraits, pictures, sculptures, etc., displayed and since the function of each room is clearly definable.

The distinction between a 'cell division type' and 'organ type' is another type of metaphorical model for grasping the difference between a Japanese type of house and an Occidental type of house. In a traditional Japanese house, the rooms were constructed in such a way that some of the rooms were combined into one spacious room by removing sliding doors between them at the time of a funeral, wedding ceremony, etc. After the rites, the space was restored to its original state by fitting the sliding doors again. Besides, one room was often partitioned by putting up a Japanese style screen in order to use it for more than one purpose. Tarumi (1983) has likened these characteristics of a Japanese house to a 'cell division', and a sliding door, to a 'cell wall.' An American and European house is, on the other hand, compared to an 'organ' by him, since the function of each room is very clearly defined, like that of a heart, stomach, brain, etc.

Incidentally, Kittay has made use of a 'room metaphor' to explain the difference between conventional meaning and metaphorical meaning. He has likened conventional meaning to a room with the furniture appropriate for its function, while metaphorical meaning is compared to a room with some pieces of furniture inappropriate for its ordinary function. It should be noticed that using the room metaphor in this way is only possible with the Occidental presupposition or analysis, for a functional property of each room in an Occidental house is well definable and 'organic.'

The discussion so far makes us realize that in building the two types of models of a house, both of them are made by emphasizing the characteristics of rooms in a house. That is to say, special emphasis is placed on the flexible use of rooms in a Japanese house

and the functionally stable use of rooms in an Occidental house. The fact shows that characteristics of a house in each area are metonymically and synecdochically grasped. In addition, the discussion of the first part of this section leads us to the conclusion that we have a metonymical way of thinking, since metaphorical expressions are formed by focusing on various kinds of properties of a house and people who live in it, like a haven, a box for living, a stage of a life, etc. Johnson (1987) has claimed that a metonymical extension of meaning is one of the indispensable elements for explaining an extension of meaning. This paper claims, moreover, that metaphors of house and home clearly demonstrate that metonymical and synecdochical ways of thinking are used in our ordinary perception of the world.

4. CONCLUSION

In this discussion, first, it has been shown that distributional differences of metaphorical expressions like wall, brick, block, etc., in English and hashira, kabe, etc., in Japanese may be attributed to those of the functional and materialistic features of some parts of a house in each area. In other words, an image of a traditional timber-framed house, the load of which is supported by a central post/pillar is still alive in the Japanese language, at the same time that there are many, many buildings of bricks and concrete in Japan. An image of a traditional masonry house, the load of which is supported by walls, is also alive in the English language. As for the term door and one of the corresponding expressions to, moreover, it has been claimed that the difference of the concept of the inside and the outside of a house is relevant to the distributional disparity in these terms. That is, the existence of a board fence or wall with a gate surrounding a traditional house and yard in Japan, and the consequent minimal functional importance of a door may be one of the reasons why the term to occurs rarely as a metaphor. In an Occidental house, on the other hand, the door has a symbolic prominence because of its function as an entrance, in addition to that of the door itself. This evidence, as is claimed, may lead us to the fact the term door is used frequently as a metaphor or synecdoche. These two pieces of evidence show that some of the traditional features of a house are still inherited in each language, especially in metaphors.

Second, it has been shown that metaphorical models of a house in both areas are built on the basis of the way the rooms of a house are used. Besides, it may have been able to indicate that various kinds of expressions are formed focusing on some structural and functional characteristics of the parts of a house. From this, a conclusion has been drawn that we human-beings have a metonymical way of thinking. The way of thinking may be relevant to the metaphors of some parts of a house, since the term hashira, for example, occurs as a metaphorical expression because of its functional importance for supporting the load of a roof. In addition, the term door is frequently used as a metaphor, due to the functional importance as an entrance to the inside, etc.

In short, it may be concluded that an image of a traditional culture and technology is still alive in each language speaking community, especially in the language, in spite of flourishing international cultural and technological exchanges. The evidence is more or less relevant to the difference in ways of thinking in each language community. In spite of the above fact, it may be claimed that we have common metonymical and synecdochical ways of thinking.

Note

1. *AEN* stands for *Asahi Evening News*. Incidentally, sentences from the articles of English language newspapers issued in Japan, such as *AEN* and *The Japan Times*, are cited from those which are clearly understood to have been written by native English speakers.

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