

## **Synaesthetic Metaphors of Television Food Commercial Ads in Mandarin Chinese**

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### **Abstract**

Synaesthesia is one of the most interesting phenomena in neurology, psychology, or cognitive linguistics. It is one of the most common types of metaphoric transfer in all languages (Williams, 1976). This paper focuses on synaesthetic metaphors of television food commercials in Mandarin Chinese. The data are collected from Taiwanese national television channels in the early evening hours on a weeknight in the winter of 2010 with the first 100 commercials that appeared being analyzed. The 26 food ads are analyzed by Yang's (2000) classification and Day's (1996) "hierarchical distribution". The research goals are: (1) In regard to food commercial ads, which synaesthetic transfer has been used most frequently; (2) Do those conceptual mapping roles support Day's (1996) theoretical framework of "hierarchical distribution"? The results show that the synaesthetic transfer from *vision* to *taste* is the most frequent route, and *taste* and *emotion* are the first two target domains. This mapping direction contradicts Day's (1996) hypothesis of "hierarchical distribution." Furthermore, the result also reflects language diversity in that synaesthetic metaphors may vary from culture to culture. To conclude, this study sheds light on how synaesthetic metaphors are applied in television food commercials in Mandarin Chinese.

Key words: Food commercials, Synaesthesia, Synaesthetic metaphor, Mandarin Chinese

## INTRODUCTION

Food supplies energy and nutrition for human beings. The relationship between food, language and culture interacts one and another. In Mandarin Chinese, there is an old saying that goes *min2 yi3 shi2 wei2 tian1* 民以食爲天 ‘bread is the staff of life’. Under this cultural norm, Chinese people treat food seriously and they enjoying eating as well as tasting.

Taste, according to Bourdieu (1984: 190), is “an incorporated principle of classification which governs all forms of incorporation, choosing and modifying everything that the body ingests and digests and assimilates, physiologically and psychologically.” In other words, taste consists of our everyday life experiences, motions, perceptions, and values (Strauss, 2005). By using each sensory organ, people can feel and enjoy the pleasure or displeasure gave by taste and then create taste expression.

Research on taste usually investigates taste vocabularies in various languages perceived through any of the five senses or via a combination of sensory receptors (Strauss, 2005). These studies provide the corresponding language-specific descriptor, which is known as synaesthesia. Synaesthesia comes from Greek, where “syn” means “together”, and “aesthesia” is derived from “aistheesis” means “sensation”. Thus, it is the neurological mixing of the senses. In other words, one sensation is stimulated by another sense modality, for example, if one ‘hears’ colors or ‘sees’ sounds. When synaesthesia comes into language, it forms phrases such as *warm voice*, *soft light*, and *velvet smile* (Hsieh, 2009) which makes the abstract sensation, *sound* and *vision*, concrete. As many researchers reported, there is a universal tendency of the synaesthetic transfer (Ullmann, 1959; Williams, 1976, Lien, 1994, Day, 1996; Yu, 1992, 2003). That is, concrete senses, *taste* and *touch*-. are usually served as the source for referring to abstract referents, *vision* and *sound* (Bloomfield, 1933).

This paper builds on the current literature by analyzing synaesthetic transfers as they appear in a specified context, food commercials from Taiwan. As mentioned earlier, synaesthetic metaphors have caught linguistic interest long before. In 1959, Ullmann proposed a theoretical framework of “hierarchical distribution.” At that time, there were five general senses, *touch*, *taste*, *smell*, *vision*, *hearing*, were covered in the scheme. When Day (1996) started the research on synaesthesia and synaesthetic metaphors, he added the sixth sense, temperature, to make the transfer more detailed.

Thus, in the current study, some issues are touched upon. First, in regard to food commercial ads, which synaesthetic transfer is used most frequently. The reason for choosing food commercials as the data is that TV commercials convey their concepts to the target audience in an efficient and precise way within a limited time through language and entire content. In other words, synaesthetic transfer, a phenomenon which contains senses mapping from each other, may play a role in this integration.

The second issue touched in the present research is whether the roles of the synaesthetic mappings therein support Day's (1996) theoretical framework of "general distribution". Third, compared to Strauss' (2005) research, who compared and contrasted languages and culture across three languages, Japanese, Korean, the U.S., what the differences are in terms of cultural norms.

In what follows, the related research covering how synaesthesia is integrated into language will be discussed in Section 2. The theoretical framework will be covered in Section 3, including Day's (1996) "general distribution" and Yang's (2000) classification, as well as the data collection. The results analyzed by source domains are laid out in Section 4 and are followed by a discussion. Lastly, there is a summary of present study.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The focus of this section deals with previous studies of synaesthetic metaphor and synaesthetic metaphor in television food ads.

### Studies of Synaesthetic Metaphor

In 1959, Ullmann, the pioneer of synaesthetic transfer, analyzed synaesthetic metaphors existing in 19<sup>th</sup> century poetry and proposed a theoretical framework of "hierarchical distribution." This framework concluded three tendencies in terms of synaesthetic transfers. First, the direction of synaesthetic transfer moves from the "lower" to the "higher" sensory modality. That is, those who obtain qualities of lower senses would occur on the left of the hierarchy, such as *touch*, and *taste*. When synaesthetic transfer happened, these "lower" sensory modality would map part of their sensory meaning onto a "higher" sense, such as *sound* and *color*. Based on them, Ullmann also summed up that this "hierarchical distribution" is unidirectional. In other words, *sound* and *vision* are more often described by touch than vice versa. Since then how these transfers interact with each other has been the interest of several linguists (Strauss, 2005; Hsieh and Kolodkina, 2007; Ling, 2009; Shen and Gadir, 2009).

In 1976, Williams followed the synaesthetic transfer patterns in daily English and brought up a similar regularity with a refinement to the generalization. The differences between Ullmann (1959) and Williams (1976) are:

(1) The sensory modes are more refined in Williams' than in Ullmann's treatment. Unlike Ullmann's sensory categories, *vision* was separated into *dimension* and *color* in Williams' mapping.

(2) Both *touch* and *dimension* could serve as an independent source domain in Williams' synaesthetic transfer while there was single source, *touch*, in Ullmann's

“hierarchical distribution”.

(3) In Ullmann’s tendency, the transfer was single and unidirectional. Since there were two senses provided as the source, the transfer route was more complicated in Williams’ schedule but still it was unidirectional.

(4) *Sound* and *color* could transfer back and forth in Williams’ while *vision* was more often transcribed to *sound* than vice versa in Ullmann’s scheme.

In order to prove the universal validity of Williams’ (1976) synaesthetic scheme, Lien (1994) applied his generalization to the synaesthetic words in Southern Min (henceforth SM). Unlike Williams’ scheme where *touch* and *dimension* were independent, they were interacted in Lien’s transfer. That is, *dimension* could be transferred to *touch* but not the other way round. Moreover, Lien’s scheme also explained the exceptions in Williams’, such as *color* to *taste* and *dimension* to *touch*. Despite the differences, Lien viewed that the unidirectional metaphorical mapping was existed. Combining Williams’ (1976) framework and Lien’s (1994) pattern, Yang (2000) examined synaesthetic words in Mandarin and found that the taste terms in Mandarin Chinese were related to the internal self (Sweetser, 1990) and could be used for describing personal likes and dislike. Likewise, this argument was also reported by Tsao (1997) who proposed that taste terms in Chinese could also express the meaning of experiences (Hsieh, 2009; Chen, 2010), such as ‘taste the joys of freedom’.

In addition, in the comparison of gustatory synaesthetic metaphors in Mandarin Chinese and Russian, Hsieh (2009) indicated that *emotion* and *touch* are the most popular senses for *taste* transfer both in Mandarin Chinese and Russian, except that Russian had a much wider distribution. Chen (2010) used Taiwanese songs from the 80’s and 90’s as data and discovered that gustatory synaesthetic metaphors played an important role in synaesthetic transfer for *sour*, *sweet*, *bitter*, *spicy*, and *salty* were perceptions represented not only in taste, but also in love and life.

### **The Synaesthetic Metaphor of the Television Food Ads**

Strauss (2005) conducted a cross-cultural analysis of taste terms in food commercials from Japan, Korea, and the United States. It pertained to the sensory perception, *taste*, and examined its semantic characteristics used in commercial advertisements. The cross-linguistics analysis combined two levels, macro and micro level. In the macro level, Strauss argued on the basic structure, content, and organization of the discourse, that is, the surface meaning. As for the micro-level, she focused on language use, such as grammatical structure, comparative lexical semantics, lexical choice, prosody, and pragmatic implicatures.

The data was collected from national television channels in Yokohama, Seoul, and Los Angeles in the spring of 1996. Strauss used the first 100 commercials that were shown during a three-hour recording in the early evening hours on a weeknight. The target commercials were 42 out of 100 from Japan, 30 from Korea, and 23 from

the U.S. She analyzed the data according to how taste and tactility were combined to aestheticize the food products in order to attract the target audience in each country.

The results indicated that the taste terms in the Japanese corpus tended to be less descriptive and included fewer synaesthetically derived descriptors than those in the U.S. and Korean corpora. Hence, compared to the “softness” found in the Japanese ads, the U.S. database evoked both visual and tactile sensations such as “it tastes richer, much creamier”<sup>1</sup> (Strauss, 2005: 1443). In addition, the taste terms of the Korean corpus were more complex in terms of sensory expression than the Japanese and U.S. databases. For instance, the Korean commercials applied sounds, textures, and impressions phonologically recreated in the actual pronunciation of the words.

All in all, Strauss (2005) argued that from the food and beverage database, the discourse positively evoked synaesthetic descriptions through the combination of gustatory, visual, tactile, and auditory transfers. However, can this result be generalized into Mandarin Chinese? In order to expand the scope of this research and discover the conceptualization of synaesthetic metaphor, the goal of the present paper is to discover the conceptual mapping rules that underlie Chinese synaesthetic metaphors of *taste*, especially in the commercial genre.

In order to expand the scope of Strauss’ (2005) research and examine Day’s (1996) “general distribution” of synaesthetic metaphor in terms of Mandarin Chinese, the method that Strauss used and Day’s theory will be applied in the present paper.

## METHODOLOGY AND DATA

In Day’s (1996) general distribution, he added a sixth sense, *temperature*, which is separated from *touch* as shown in Figure 1. He examined printed and electronic English texts and found that the general distribution of synaesthetic metaphor was shown as bellow.

touch → taste → temperature → smell → vision → hearing

Fig. 1 Day’s general distribution (1996: 15).

From this scheme, the sense on the left of the arrow could serve as the source for the one on the opposite side of the arrow. For example, “a sour smell” indicates *smell* goes to *taste*. Thus, in Day’s general distribution, *touch* is the primary source in terms of synaesthetic transfer while hearing is most frequently expanded and elaborated by other senses. This implies that synaesthetic metaphor transfers from the “lower” to the “higher” sensory modes as well.

In order to expand the scope of Strauss’ (2005) research on *taste*, researchers

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<sup>1</sup> In Strauss’ (2005) paper, the original text is ‘it tastes richer, much creamier’.

follow Strauss' (2005) way of data collection. The commercials were recorded from four national television channels, Taiwan Television (TTV), China Television (CTV), Chinese Television System (CTS), and Formosa Television (FTV), in Tainan, Taiwan in the early evening hours on a weeknight in the winter of 2010. The first 100 commercials, excluding public service announcements and repetitious ads that appeared during a three-hour recording period were collected as the data base in the present study. Within these 100 ads, only the commercials which contained food, beverages, and retail food establishments were regarded as food ads and analyzed in this research. The programs surrounding the commercials were rebroadcast variety shows, cartoons, game shows, rebroadcast fashion shows, talk shows, and news broadcasts.

The sense classification is based on Yang's (2000) criteria, which was reorganized from Langacker (1987), Gleitman (1981), and Ogura & Wang's (1995) findings and *Online Chinese Dictionary* (National Science Council Digital Library and Museum, 1994) as well. Based on Yang's (2000) classification, *da4* 大 'big', *xiao3* 小 'small', *man3* 滿 'full', *nong2* 濃 'dense', *chun2* 純 'pure', and *qing1* 清 'clear' are categorized as visual lexemes. Olfactory keywords are *xiang1* 香 'fragrant', *chou4* 臭 'smelly', and *xing1* 腥 'offensive smell.' The tactile perception could be expressed by *zhong4* 重 'heavy', (*guang1*) *hua2* (光)滑 'smooth', *rou2* 柔 'mild', *ruan3* 軟 'soft', *ying4* 硬 'hard', *nen4* 嫩 'tender', *ren4* 韌 'pliable but strong', and *cui4* 脆 'crisp.' Lexemes of temperature are like *han2* 寒 'chilly', *leng3* 冷 'cold', *re4* 熱 'hot', *liang2* 涼 'cool', *wen1* 溫 'warm', *nuan3* 暖 'warm', and *tang4* 燙 'very hot'. Words for representing taste are *suan1* 酸 'sour', *tian2* 甜 'sweet', *gan1* 甘 'sweet', *ku2* 苦 'bitter', *xin1* 辛 'pungent', *su1* 酥 'crisp', *dan4* 淡 'light', and *xian1* 鮮 'fresh'. As for hearing, Yang did not state is specifically. Thus, the judging point is based on the familiarity of Mandarin Chinese and *Online Chinese Dictionary*. Once the phrase contains sensory lexemes, it is selected as potential data. The syntactic structure and category do not concern us in the present research. In addition, a good commercial could easily arouse audiences' feeling of purchasing. Hence, a new criterion is adapted in the present study, that is, *emotion*. Viewing the concept of synaesthesia from a broader perspective, pseudo-synaesthesia, *emotion* plays an interactive role in forming synaesthesia (Bardovskaya, 2002; Cytowic, 2002; Hsieh, 2009). Therefore, *emotion* is also applied in the present study.

Turning now to the aims of present study, the following section will analyze the collected commercial ads and examine Day's (1996) "general distribution" to discuss whether there are universal general rules governing the synaesthetic metaphor and to what extent they are sensitive to and associated with cultural differences.

## SYNAESTHESIA IN FOOD DESCRIPTIONS

Of the 100 collected data, 26 of them are related to food commercial ads, food, beverages, and retail food establishments. Within these food advertisements, 35 synaesthetic transfers are identified in terms of Yang's (2000) classification of sensory lexeme. Then, Day's (1996) "general distribution" is applied and the results are examined. Table 1 shows the frequencies of synaesthetic transfers. The vertical column is the source domain and the horizontal is the transferred sensation. For instance, *xiang1 nong2* 香濃 'smell thick, something has a thick smell' means the smell of the food is very strong. According to Yang's (2000) classification, she discovered that the original sensory domain of *nong2* 濃 'dense' is *vision*. Thus, the synaesthetic transfer of *xiang1 nong2* 香濃 maps from the vertical column of *vision* to the horizontal one, *smell*.

Interestingly, in this particular frame, food commercial ads of synaesthesia, the "higher" sensory mode, *vision*, is the prominent primary sense while the "lower" sensory mode, *taste*, is the dominant synaesthetic sense. This mapping direction goes against what Day (1996) discovered, who observed that English synaesthetia is transferred from the "lower" to the "higher" sensory modes. This distinction will be discussed below.

Table 1

*The Domains of Synaesthetic Transfers in Mandarin Food Commercial Ads*

	vision	hearing	smell	touch	temperature	taste	emotion	Total
vision	-	-	5	-	-	9	2	16
hearing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
smell	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	4
touch	-	-	-	-	-	4	1	5
temperature	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
taste	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
emotion	1	-	1	-	-	4	-	6
Total	1	-	6	-	-	21	7	35

\* - = no data are found

### Synaesthetic Expressions through Vision

*Vision* is the dominant source domain of the synaesthetic metaphor transfers as we can see in Table 1, which occurs 16 times. Within this category, *taste* is the most frequent target domain with 9 occurrences followed by *smell* and *emotion*. As for *hearing* and *touch*, there are no mapping results within the 35 synaesthetic transfers. Example (1) indicates synaesthetic transfer from *vision* to *taste* which mapping

direction goes against Day's (1996) general distribution. In terms of semantic salience, *mei3* 美 'beautiful', which is received by vision is used frequently. When it combines with *wei4* 味 'taste', *xian1* 鮮 'fresh', and *gan1* 甘 'sweet', it uses its positive semantic feature, good and beautiful, to describe the taste.

The second most frequent visual lexeme in this category is *nong2* 濃 'thick', which transfers its semantic feature of thickness, identified by eyes, to taste. In (1g), the word *wei4* 味 'taste' is modified by the word of *vision*, *nong2* 濃 'thick' condensing the image of strong taste. Similarly, in (1h), *nong2* 濃 'thick' maps onto the word of *taste*, *tian2* 甜 'sweet', to create the rich sweetness of Charlie King's black tea.

In addition to *mei3* 美 'beautiful' and *nong2* 濃 'thick', there are other visual words gathered in food commercial ads, that is *xin1* 新 'new' and *ceng2 ci4* 層次 'layer'. The quality of *xin1* 新 'new' is judged by eyes and it contains the meaning of "just picked" in Mandarin Chinese. Hence, when it has the synaesthetic transfer to *xian1* 鮮 'fresh', the overall meaning becomes "fresh". In (1b), the ads uses the visual phrase, *ceng2 ci4* 層次 'multi-storey', to describe the texture, *kou3 gan3* 口感 'mouthfeel' of the food. This synaesthesia helps the audience to visualize the texture of the food and arouse the desire to purchase it.

(1) vision → taste:

- a. *xin1 xian1* 新鮮 'new fresh, fresh'
- b. *duo1 ceng2 ci4 de kou3 gan3* 多層次的口感 'multi-storey sequence mouthfeel, it has different layer's of taste'
- c. *mei3 wei4* 美味 'beautiful taste, delicious'
- d. *xian1 mei3* 鮮美 'fresh beautiful, fresh and delicious'
- e. *gan1 mei3* 甘美 'sweet beautiful, sweet and refreshing'
- f. *jian4 kang1 hao3 he1* 健康好喝 'healthy good drink, this drink is good to drink'
- g. *nong2 nong2 ri4 shi4 feng1 wei4* 濃濃日式風味 'thick thick Japanese wind taste, it has strong Japanese flavor'
- h. *cha2 li3 wang2 de ying1 shi4 hong2 cha2 xiang1 tian2 nong2 yu4* 茶裏王的英式紅茶 香甜濃郁 'Charlie King's black tea fragrant sweet thick fragrant, Charlie King's black tea has strong fragrant flavor'

The examples in (2) and (3) below show other mapping domains for *vision*; namely, *smell* and *emotion*. The image in (2a) is as similar as in (1b) in that the "smell" is shaped by *ceng2 ci4* 層次 'multi-storey', which makes the audience sense

the fragrance of the product. It involves a “high to low” mapping, *vision* → *smell*. In (2b) and (2c), the “fragrance” of the product is “thickness” and “spreading out”. Apparently, the producers create the visible “smell” to draw consumers’ attention. Still, they are *vision* → *smell* synaesthetic transfers.

For the examples in (3), *emotion* is another target domain for *vision*. In order to sell the products, the mappings are positive. In (3a), the commercial tries to convince the audience that its beverage could make them “full” of “energy”. Another example is found in (3b), where the feeling of the product is described in terms of a color lexeme, *zheng4* 正 ‘pure’, which belongs to *vision*. Both (3a) and (3b) undergo the synaesthetic transfer from *vision* to *emotion*.

(2) *vision* → *smell*

- a. *duo1 ceng2 ci4 de dou4 xiang1* 多層次的豆香 ‘multi-storey sequence beans fragrant, the smell of beans are various’
- b. *xiang1 nong2* 香濃 ‘fragrant thick, the fragrance is richness’
- c. *xiang1 qi4 si4 yi4* 香氣四溢 ‘sweet smell four spill, it is full of fragrance’

(3) *vision* → *emotion*

- a. *jing1 li4 chong1 pei4* 精力充沛 ‘energy plentiful, energetic’
- b. *chun2 zheng4 xiang3 shou4* 純正享受 ‘pure enjoy, enjoy purely’

### Synaesthetic Expressions through the Olfactory Sense

The examples in (4) below demonstrate synaesthetic metaphorical transfer from *smell* to *taste*. The taste, *zi1 wei4* 滋味 ‘taste’ in example (4a) is reinforced by the lexeme of smell, *yu4* 郁 ‘fragrant’. The mapping from *smell* to *taste* has evoked the fragrant deliciousness of the food. (4b) creates a similar image of taste: the taste, *tian2* 甜 ‘sweet’, is reinforced by the sense of smell, *xiang1* 香 ‘fragrant’ and *yu4* 郁 ‘fragrant’. The above powerful feeling is conveyed by the synaesthetic metaphor: *smell* → *taste*, which is another backward transfer in regard to Day’s scheme.

(4) *smell* → *taste*

- a. *nong2 yu4 zi1 wei4* 濃郁滋味 ‘thick fragrant taste, the taste is thick and full of fragrance’
- b. *cha2 li3 wang2 de ying1 shi4 hong2 cha2 xiang1 tian2 nong2 yu4* 茶裏王的英式紅茶 香甜濃郁 ‘Charlie King’s black tea fragrant sweet thick fragrant, Charlie King’s black tea has strong fragrant flavor’

### Synaesthetic Expressions through the Tactile Sense

The examples in (5) and (6) below represent synaesthetic expressions through the tactile sense, *temperature* and *touch*. Within the collected data, *emotion* and *taste* are

found to be the target domains. In example (5), the synaesthetic transfer from *temperature* to *emotion* conveys a friendly image of the trip by using the sense of temperature, *wen1 nuan3* 溫暖 ‘warm’. The three examples in (6) are mappings from *touch* to *taste* and conform to Day’s route. In (6a), the texture of the product is modified by a Taiwanese loan word in touch, Q, which means toughness. This synaesthetic transfer, *touch* to *taste*, gives an impression of chewing to customers. When using a tactile lexeme, *zhong4* 重 ‘heavy’, as in (6b) to describe the taste, it has nothing to do with the weight but with “strong flavor”. In (6c), the taste is said to be described by the Mandarin Chinese lexeme, *shun4* 順 ‘smooth’, which appeals to the sense of touch. It brings the connection of *taste* and *touch* and leads the audience to have a vivid image of the product. In (7), when people can handle, *shou3* 手 ‘hand’, things without any effort, the positive feeling, relaxed and skillful, occurs. The synaesthetic transfer in this example is the sense of touch maps onto the sense of emotion.

(5) temperature → emotion

*mai3 guan1 dong1 zhu3, wen1 nuan3 xiao3 lü3 xing2* a. 買關東煮，溫暖小旅行  
‘buy Kantoni warm little trip, after buying some Kantoni, the trip becomes warmer’

(6) touch → taste

a. *wu3 Q wu3 Q 舞 Q 舞 Q* ‘dance Q, it has toughness texture’

b. *zhong4 hong1 pei2 na2 tie3* 重烘培拿鐵 ‘heavy baked Latte, the Latte has strong coffee flavor’

c. *mian2 mi4 hua2 shun4* 綿密滑順 ‘silk dense smooth, it tastes silky and smooth’

(7) touch → emotion

*de2 xin1 ying4 shou3* 得心應手 ‘get heart accept hand, skillfully’

### Synaesthetic Expressions through the Gustatory Sense

In the gustatory source domain, *emotion* is the only synaesthetic transfer demonstrated in example (8). The common feature in this example is that the negative taste maps onto the negative emotion while the positive transfers to the delightful feeling. In (8a), when someone feels “suffering” and “tough” about work, the emotional state is similar to taste something is hot or pungent. The metaphorical transfer composites the synaesthetic mapping from *taste* to *emotion*. Since *xin1* 辛 ‘pungent’ conveys hardship, *tian2* 甜 ‘sweet’ tells the opposite story. Viewing from the neurological perspective, the taste of *tian2* 甜 ‘sweet’ could easily trigger happiness and contentment. Making good use of this connection, the synaesthetic transfer implies to the audience that the dessert could give them happiness.

(8) taste → emotion

a. *xin1 lao2* 辛勞 ‘pungent work, it takes lots of effort to work’

b. *xing4 fu2 tian2 dian3* 幸福甜點 ‘happiness dessert, the sweet dessert tastes like happiness’

### Synaesthetic Expressions through Emotion

Example (9), (10), and (11) show synaesthetic transfers from *emotion* to *vision*, *smell*, and *taste*, respectively. In (9), the ad guarantees the audiences that the company uses its “whole heart” to manufacture the product. Even from seeing its “layers”, the customers could feel how careful the food is been made. Thus, the synaesthetic transfer maps from *emotion* to *vision*. In (10), the commercial claims that by drinking this beverage, the costumers could “enjoy” its “mellow taste”. In addition, after “tasting” some products, costumers could have the feeling of being “loved”, as shown in (11b) or they could become “love-eaters”, as shown in (11a). The synaesthetic transfer from *emotion* to *taste* is to create the happy atmosphere for audiences trying the products.

(9) emotion → vision

*ceng2 ceng2 yong4 xin1* 層層用心 ‘layer layer use heart, uses heart in each layer’

(10) emotion → smell

*xiang3 shou4 xiang1 chun2* 享受香醇 ‘enjoy fragrant mellow, to enjoy the fragrance and taste’

(11) emotion → taste

a. *ai4 chi1* 愛吃 ‘love eat, love-eater’

b. *ai4 de zi1 wei4* 愛的滋味 ‘love taste, the taste is full of love’

All in all, there are eleven different synaesthetic transfers found in 35 examples, as listed in (12) below:

(12) a. vision → taste

b. vision → smell

c. vision → emotion

d. smell → taste

e. temperature → emotion

f. touch → taste

g. touch → emotion

h. taste → emotion

- i. emotion → vision
- j. emotion → smell
- k. emotion → taste

Of these 11 kinds, only (12f) follows Day's (1996) general distribution, which transfers from "lower" to "higher" sensory mode. Three of them, (12a), (12b), and (12d), move downward from "higher" to "lower" sensory modalities. Six of them, (12c), (12e), (12g), (12h), (12i) (12j), and (12k) show that emotive factors play a role in forming synaesthesia which is proved by psychologists and neurophysiologists (Hsieh, 2009). The most frequent synaesthetic transfer is from vision → taste. However, in food commercial ads, there transfers related to *hearing* are not found. These results deserve further discussion in the following section.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CULTURAL REFLECTIONS

In this section, the potential causation that influences the universal tendency proposed by Day (1996) will be discussed as well as the socio-cultural comparison with Strasuss' (2005) finding. In Mandarin Chinese, people often use the phrases, *se4 xiang1 wei4 ju4 quan2* 色香味俱全 'color fragrant taste complete all; the food looks good, smells great and tastes the best' to describe delicacies. In other words, *vision*, *smell*, and *taste* are three important criteria for tasty food. Since the sensual evocation of television commercials is built mainly through vision with some help from music, *vision* plays an important role in synaesthesia. In this view, *vision* is applied as the main source domain in terms of synaesthetic transfers. Not only does the mapping from *vision* to *taste* have the highest frequency, but the transfer from *vision* to *smell* runs second. Under this particular situational context, three out of eleven synaesthetic types go against Day's (1996) "general distribution", which is evident from the English printed and electronic texts.

Therefore, in the present finding, six out of eleven synaesthetic types are related to *emotion*, which supports what psychologists and neurophysiologists have proved. That is, *emotion* is one element in forming synaesthesia (Cytowic, 2002; Hsieh, 2009). Interestingly, the mapping direction between *emotion* and *vision*, and *emotion* and *taste*, can be transferred back and forth. In addition to the linguistic descriptors, the synaesthetic mapping could be also conveyed by non-verbal content, such as the background music, and commercial settings. In Dove chocolate, for example, there is a woman lying on a deck chair with silk curtains as the background. Although there is only one slogan during its 30-second show, seeing the flying "brown silk curtains" elicits the "smooth texture" of tasting the chocolate. Through this metaphorical implication, the audience could imagine what Dove chocolate tastes like, smooth.

Thus, the synaesthetic metaphors in the food commercial ads are not only found literally but also symbolically, the setting. A similar transfer is also discussed in Strauss' (2005) finding. One of the Japanese food commercials she analyzed used the image of a baby, thus referring to the softness of the product. On the contrary, there is no evidence for mapping backward from *taste* to *vision* in the present data. This phenomenon is also argued by Hsieh (2009) who conducted comparative synaesthetic metaphors of *taste* between Mandarin Chinese and Russian. She indicated that "transfers from taste to vision are abundant in Russian but not obvious in our Mandarin data" (Hsieh, 2009: 109).

From the point of view of food commercials as the culturally-driven outcome, different cultures prefer different discourse genres. In the present findings, Taiwanese food commercials tend to use positive connotations, such as *nong2 yu4* 濃郁 'strong fragrant', *mian2 mi4 hua2 shun4* 綿密滑順 'it tastes silky and smooth', *xiang1 chun2* 香醇 'fragrance and taste', which describes the taste perceived by the tongue and inside the entire mouth. These expressions are similar to the U.S. database in Strauss' (2005) research. While the Korean food commercials emphasize 'what is hard and tactually stimulating' (Strauss, 2005: 1448), the Taiwanese ads stress on what is rich and comforting. Unlike the Korean and U.S. food commercials which prefer to employ hyperbole and emphatic exclamations in direct response to the tasting of the products (Strauss, 2005), the Taiwanese food ads are closer to the Japanese ones in that there are fewer examples of hyperbole and vocal exclamations in response to the advertised products.

To sum up, in the Taiwanese food commercials, the most frequent synaesthetic transfer is from *vision* to *taste*, while there is no mapping for the sense of *hearing* in either the source or target domains. In addition, neither *vision* nor *touch* is treated as a target domain. However, from the eleven types of synaesthetic transfers, *emotion* is a basic element in forming synaesthetic mappings. As for Day's (1996) "general distribution", there are some downward transfers observed in the present data, such as the mapping routes from *vision* to *taste*, *vision* to *smell*, and *smell* to *taste*. Moreover, the cross-cultural comparisons of food commercial ads are observed via Strauss' (2005) findings.

## CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrated synaesthetic metaphor in Mandarin Chinese focusing on food commercials in light of Yang's (2000) classification and Day's (1996) "general distribution." Among the collected data, the most frequent tendency of synaesthetic transfer was from *vision* to *taste*, followed by *vision* to *smell*. The interactions between these three senses, vision, taste, and smell, could be the

socio-cultural factor why *se4 xiang1 wei4 ju4 quan2* 色香味俱全 ‘the food looks good, smells great and tastes the best’ is the most common way to comment on delicacies in Mandarin Chinese.

Moreover, unlike Day’s (1996) hypothesis of “general distribution” where the synaesthetic transfer tends to go from the “lower” to the “higher” sensory modes, touch → taste → temperature → smell → vision → hearing, *vision* is used as the most frequent sensory perception in Taiwanese food commercials, while *taste* is the most frequently occurring target sensory and *emotion* in the second place. This diversity could be caused by the particular context selected in the present research, food commercials. The activated emotional synaesthesia confirms modern neurological and psychological theories that *emotion* is involved in intermodal associations and processes of cognition (Hsieh, 2009). Surprisingly, the sense of *hearing* was absent in both the source and target domains. As mentioned, hearing was not observed serving as the focus for judging delicacy. According to this, producers rarely use sound related expressions to describe their products, nor do they guide their audience to have any sound impression of food.

From the point of view of time restriction in data collection, the types of food commercials could be different. During the evening hours, for example, the food advertisements are more related to children’s or family products. When the night comes, the commercials shift to more adult-like ones, such as coffee and alcohol. Thus, the language use could be influenced by time. In order to examine the universal tendency and cultural differences among the synaesthetic transfers, an expanded data source, other types of television commercials or print ads, is needed. All in all, the findings could be interpreted in terms of cultural difference, as “the associations should vary from culture to culture” (Day, 1996).

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## 從食品廣告探討華語的聯覺隱喻

### 摘要

聯覺現象不管在神經學、心理學或認知語言學的範疇都受到廣泛的重視。本研究旨在探討華語食品廣告中的聯覺隱喻現象，研究問題是：(1). 在食物廣告裡，何種聯覺轉移最顯著；(2). 華語廣告的聯覺現象是否支持 Day (1996)的階層詮釋？首先，我們從台視、中視、華視和民視蒐集到 100 筆廣告語料。接著我們以 Yang (2000)的分類及 Day (1996)的階層詮釋 (hierarchical distribution) 來探討這些語料。研究結果顯示：(a). 在食品廣告中聯覺現象由視覺到味覺最為明顯，味覺與情感是最主要的轉移目標。(b). 聯覺轉移路徑顯示與 Day 的階層詮釋有所抵觸。進一步比較英語的相關研究，我們看到聯覺隱喻因不同文化而反映出語言的多變性。總之，透過本研究我們補充了 Strauss (2005) 的研究結果，也提供聯覺隱喻在中文食物廣告裡的面向。

關鍵字：食品廣告 聯覺 聯覺隱喻 文化對比