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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EMOTIONAL ABSTRACT NOUNS IN  
CHINESE AND ENGLISH

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This article examines the structural, semantic, and cultural characteristics of emotional abstract nouns in Chinese and English. Emotional abstract nouns, which express internal psychological states and subjective emotional experiences, play a significant role in conceptualizing human feelings across cultures. The study identifies the similarities and differences in lexical formation, semantic fields, and cultural connotations of emotional abstract nouns in the two languages. The analysis demonstrates that while both languages possess rich emotional vocabularies, Chinese emotional nouns often reflect collectivist, relational, and metaphoric cultural values, whereas English emotional nouns commonly emphasize individuality, internality, and personal expression.

Human emotions are conceptualized and expressed differently across languages. Emotional abstract nouns—such as *happiness*, *fear*, *love* in English or 快乐 *kuàilè*, 恐惧 *kǒngjù*, 爱 *ài* in Chinese—serve as linguistic markers of internal psychological states and socio-cultural values.

As a typologically distinct language with a logographic writing system and deep cultural heritage, Chinese encodes emotions through a combination of metaphor, symbolism, and culturally embedded concepts. English, representing an Indo-European language, reflects a different linguistic and philosophical tradition.

The purpose of this article is to conduct a comparative linguistic analysis of emotional abstract nouns in Chinese and English, focusing on their semantic structures, cultural interpretation, and cognitive characteristics.

Emotional abstract nouns refer to nouns that express intangible emotional states, feelings, or psychological conditions. They typically lack physical reference and are mentally constructed concepts.

Examples:

- **English: Chinese:** *happiness*, *sadness*, *anger*, *jealousy*, *shame*, *fear*
- 快乐 *kuàilè*, 悲伤 *bēishāng*, 愤怒 *fènnù*, 嫉妒 *jídù*, 羞耻 *xiūchǐ*, 害怕 *hàipà*

Cognitive and cultural linguistics

The study draws on:

- **Cognitive linguistics:** how emotions are conceptualized in human cognition.
- **Cultural linguistics:** how cultural models and values influence language.



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Emotions are not universally categorized the same way. Each language reflects its own worldview (*Weltanschauung*).

Formation in English

English emotional nouns are typically formed via:

- **Derivation:**

*happy* → *happiness*, *angry* → *anger*

- **Latinate borrowings:**

*emotion*, *affection*, *passion*, *jealousy*

Most emotional nouns consist of root + suffixes: **-ness**, **-tion**, **-ity**, **-ence**.

Formation in Chinese

Chinese emotional nouns often arise through:

- **Monosyllabic morphemes** expressing basic emotions:

爱 ài 'love', 怒 nù 'anger', 哀 āi 'sadness'

- **Disyllabic compounds:**

悲伤 bēishāng 'sorrow', 快乐 kuàilè 'happiness'

- **Affixation with nominal markers** like 心 xīn (heart):

关心 guānxīn 'care', 耐心 nàixīn 'patience'

Chinese frequently uses **metaphorical body-part morphemes**, especially 心 xīn 'heart', reflecting the embodiment of emotions in East Asian thought.

English emotional nouns

Key semantic features:

- Focus on **internal psychological experience**
- Clear boundaries between emotional categories
- Strong use of **individual-centered** emotions (e.g., self-esteem, loneliness)

Chinese emotional nouns

Key semantic features:

- Emotions often conceptualized through **relational and social contexts**
- Merging of emotional and moral categories (e.g., 羞耻 xiūchǐ involves morality)

- Use of metaphors involving **heart (心)**, **qi (气)**, and **face (面子)**

Similarities

- Both languages distinguish positive and negative emotions
- Both have primary (basic) emotions and secondary (complex) emotions
- Emotional nouns can extend metaphorically

Differences

Aspect	English	Chinese
Conceptual basis	Internal personal feeling	Social, relational, moral context
Metaphors	Mind-centered	Heart-, qi-, and face-centered
Word formation	Suffixes, derivation	Morpheme compounding



Aspect	English	Chinese
Cultural influence	Individualism	Collectivism
	<p>Chinese culture</p> <p>Chinese emotional vocabulary is deeply shaped by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Confucian ethics:</b> importance of harmony, propriety, shame</li> <li>• <b>Collectivist values:</b> emotions linked to group relations</li> <li>• <b>Embodiment:</b> emotions located in the “heart–mind” system (心 <i>xīn</i>)</li> </ul> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 面子 <i>miànzi</i> (face) – emotional self-worth based on social evaluation</li> <li>• 缘分 <i>yuánfēn</i> – emotional connection tied to destiny</li> </ul> <p>English-speaking culture</p> <p>English emotional nouns often reflect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Individualism</b></li> <li>• <b>Psychological introspection</b></li> <li>• <b>Personal autonomy</b></li> </ul> <p>Concepts like <i>self-confidence</i>, <i>self-esteem</i>, <i>emotional well-being</i> have strong psychological orientation.</p> <p>Cultural contrast</p> <p>The same emotion may have different social values.</p> <p>For instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Shame</i> in Chinese (羞耻 <i>xiūchǐ</i>) carries moral responsibility.</li> <li>• In English, shame is more internal, psychological, and individualized.</li> </ul> <p>The comparative analysis of emotional abstract nouns in Chinese and English reveals significant linguistic and cultural differences. While both languages possess rich emotional lexicons, they encode emotions differently due to cognitive, cultural, and historical factors. English emotional nouns typically emphasize internal, individual experiences, while Chinese emotional nouns highlight relational, moral, and embodied dimensions of human feeling.</p> <p>Understanding these differences is essential for intercultural communication, translation studies, and cognitive linguistics. The study underscores the importance of emotional vocabulary as a reflection of cultural worldview and conceptualization of human experience.</p>	

## REFERENCES:

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