The Important Role of Metaphor Theory in College English Education

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the main contents of modern conceptual metaphor theory of cognitive linguistics, discusses the use of conceptual metaphor theory in college English teaching, teaching examples proved that the conceptual metaphor theory provides an analysis of English metaphor concept and means of language, and improved English teaching reform. We should make full use of new tools for the concept of education in college English teaching. Metaphor is not only a linguistic phenomenon, but also a cognitive way. The study of metaphor has a long history, and now it has become a hot topic in the academic field. The introduction of metaphor research into English teaching will produce more effective teaching methods. Conceptual metaphor theory is the core of cognitive linguistics, and its development has attracted the attention of scholars.

Keywords: Metaphor theory, English education, colleges and universities, educational mechanism

Introduction

Metaphor is not only a rhetorical device, but also a way of thinking. As the key of cognition and language, metaphor plays an important role in foreign language learning. With the deepening of people's understanding of metaphor, Metaphorical vocabulary teaching provides an excellent starting point for the development of cognitive science in language teaching. Metaphor based vocabulary teaching can stimulate students' subjective initiative, forcing them to think deeply about each underlying concept. In the case of a strong coordination with the idea of the schema, memory efficiency and depth of understanding will be on a new level. In addition, the cognitive characteristics and radiation characteristics of metaphor can broaden students' language learning.

Lakoff and Johnson introduced the conceptual metaphor theory in 1980, which got the attention of the academic circles. Based on a detailed review of the main contents of conceptual metaphor theory in modern cognitive linguistics, this paper discusses the significance of conceptual metaphor theory in English teaching.

Since 1970, metaphor plays a key role in the process of human cognition. Metaphor is at the heart of the unique cognitive ability of human beings and is responsible for the production, transmission and processing of meaning. Metaphor is not only a way of rhetoric, but also a basic way for human beings to understand the world. Cognitive metaphor theory reveals the basic law of people's cognition. People's understanding of the objective world is based on experience and

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the interaction between subjective and objective. The language of a nation is the result of the long-term cognitive experience of the nation, and the foreign language learning involves the two modes of the mother tongue and the target language. Every language has a metaphorical system specific, because human cognitive mechanism is the same, so different languages may also have the same metaphorical process, which makes the metaphor theory into English teaching practice become possible.

The concept of metaphor in vocabulary teaching can help students understand metaphors in the target language, so that students understand the deep meaning of vocabulary, which can improve students' reading ability and intercultural communicative competence.

![Image](image.png)

Figure 1. Metaphor theory.

**The Proposed Methodology**

**The main content of conceptual metaphor theory.** Metaphor is a kind of experience to understand another kind of experience. When a person is said to be a wolf, it is not the same thing as two things, which is obviously not a specific thing, but an inner or physical feeling or experience.

Lakoff wrote a book, named Philosophy in Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought. One of the basic ideas of the book is the experience of metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson found that people tend to use familiar things to understand new things, with specific things to understand abstract things. For example, described the debate, we can use "jealous", "drink honey", "eat coptis chinensis" and other words to describe the people inside the complex, it is difficult to say clearly the emotion, actually these words were used to describe the daily life of the people in the activity of eating. Lakoff and Johnson think that metaphor is everywhere.
The general conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical. The concept of metaphor can be divided into three categories: structure, orientation and ontology.

The first is structural metaphor, which refers to the structure of an event to understand or recognize another event, such as "time is money".

The second one is the orientational metaphor, which refers to the concept of "non space", which is usually used in "thinking", "speaking", "down", "left" and "right". In particular, some abstract concepts, such as feelings, status, and so on, they often overlap with the concept of space, the formation of metaphorical concepts, such as "human", "depression" and so on.

The third one is the ontological metaphor, referring to the use of the entity to express the concept of another word, for example, people are often likened to animals, such as "satyr", "stupid pig".

The most important point of Lakoff and Johnson is that metaphor is not only in everyday language, but also in human thinking. Metaphor is not only a linguistic problem, but also a cognitive one. Most of human thinking is metaphorical. The metaphorical nature of thinking is more fundamental and the basis and source of linguistic metaphor.

Lakoff and Johnson point out that our daily lives unconsciously acquired a huge initial metaphor system.

Lakoff’s initial metaphor system is based on the experience of human growth. Therefore, the understanding of abstract things, such as the understanding of anger, comes from more specific areas. The systematic nature of conceptual metaphor is even considered to be the result of neural correlates of human body. Lakoff’s theory of body based philosophy is obviously a kind of physical and mental view of empiricism. As a result, the metaphor based on the common physical and psychological experience has a high degree of cross language similarity, and the different physical and mental experience and cognitive style are the root cause of the particularity of metaphor in different languages. All the nations of the world have a common astonishing in the use of metaphor, especially those ethnic groups have great differences in language and culture, not only use metaphors to explain and describe the complex things, and in particular on the mode of linguistic metaphors have a lot in common.

Different cultural groups live in different living environments, so there is a difference in the way of life experience and cognition. In this way, the metaphor of the complex thinking is also different. Many abstract concepts, such as time and emotion, are constructed by means of metaphorical concepts.

The source of Lakoff’s idea is the metaphor in Chinese rhetoric, the target is the body of metaphor in rhetoric. However, not all the features of the wolf are involved in the construction of the metaphor. That is to say, almost all of the projection or mapping of metaphor is not complete, that is, only some of the source or target characteristics or attributes to participate in the construction of metaphor matching or projection. Therefore, no specific metaphor can construct an abstract concept completely and accurately. Each metaphor describing an abstract concept reflects only some aspects of it.

Each metaphor reflects only certain aspects of the abstract concept, and other aspects are hidden. So no single metaphor can play a decisive role.

The application of conceptual metaphor theory in college English teaching. Conceptual metaphor. The same metaphor often contains a series of related language expressions, reflecting the characteristics of some things from different aspects, and expressed in the form of language.

The concept of metaphor can help students understand and master a series of English expressions. For example,

MONEY IS LIQUID ↔ QUANTITY ISWATERFLOW

(1) Movement of money is the flow or movement of liquid.
In circulation: blood flow—“being passed around”
There’s too much money in circulation.

Inflow: inward movement of water—“income”.
We expect inflows of cash at the end of the month.

Outflow: movement of liquid away from a place—“outward movement of funds”.
There are strict controls on capital outflow.

(2) Plenty of money is plenty of liquid.
flush with money: liquid flowing through—“having plenty of money”.
After winning at cards he was flush with money.

(3) To make money available is to turn into liquid and to make it unavailable is to turn into solid.
Freeze: solidify because of low temperature—“prevent money being used”.
Swiss banks are now freezing corrupt officials’ bank accounts.
Frozen: solidified by the cold—“unable to be sold or used”.
The frozen assets of the last president may finally be confiscated.

(4) To provide or spend money is to provide liquid.
cash dispenser: device for giving out measures of liquid—“ATM machine”.
Most banks have a cash dispenser outside.
Channel: direct the flow of liquid—“direct funds”.
More resources will be channeled to local councils.
ladle out: distribute liquid food with a large spoon—“give generously”.
The UK didn’t exactly ladle out aid to Africa.
Pool: small pond—“to collect[money] together”.
If we pool our investments we can afford the house.
How much has been bet in the Derby pool?
Pour: cause to flow from one container to another—“provide a large amount of money”.
The college poured funds into the research project.
Pump: use pressure to cause liquid to flow—“provide large amounts [of money]”.
Japan should pump extra money into education.
splash out: make water move through the air by hitting—“spend wildly”.
He splashed out on a BMW.
tide over: flow of river or sea water—“give temporary financial help to”.
I just need $ 200 to tide me over until next week.

The above examples show that the metaphorical thinking makes many words cross the original register and cognitive domain. It can be seen that metaphor is not only a linguistic phenomenon, but also a kind of thinking and cognitive behavior. Teachers in teaching can help students have a counter three, summed up the concept of metaphor from potential specific linguistic phenomena, so as to deepen their understanding of the language. For example:
The evolution of speech may have been the most important factor of all. When early man mastered the loom of language, his progress accelerated dramatically. Through the spoken word a new invention in tool-making, for example, could be communicated to everyone; this way the innovativeness of the individual enhanced the survival prospects of his fellows, and the creative strength of one became the strength of all. More important, through language the ideas of one generation could be passed on to the next, so that each generation inherited not only the genes of its ancestors but also their collective wisdom, transmitted through the magic of speech.

According to the above sentences, we can sum up one sentence: Linguistic expressions are fabrics.
The concept of metaphor and the reform of teaching concept. The influence of conceptual metaphor on teaching concept is obvious. According to the theory of conceptual metaphor, the same word can obtain different metaphorical meanings, which are related to each other. In the process of vocabulary teaching, English teachers can follow the theory of metaphor to trace the origin of these metaphors, which can help students understand the relationship between the meanings.

In a word, both conceptual metaphor and metaphorical language are formed in the context of culture. To understand the cultural similarities and differences between English and Chinese metaphor language contains in cross-cultural communication, to stimulate students' interest in learning, the use of metaphor in cultural relations, enhance the students' mastery of English vocabulary and expressions, and to help students in cross-cultural communication, reducing pragmatic errors less because of a misunderstanding caused by the metaphorical meaning have a great effect.

Conclusion

Culture is closely related to metaphor. Metaphor is also a cultural phenomenon. In foreign language teaching, the study of metaphorical language is very important. On the one hand, students' understanding of conceptual metaphor and its linguistic expression is largely restricted by the cultural knowledge of foreign languages. On the other hand, the expression of English metaphor contains abundant cultural and cognitive information, which is a natural treasure for learning English culture. Conceptual metaphor theory provides a means to analyze the concept and language of English metaphor, and provides a new tool to analyze and absorb the western modern teaching concepts. We should make full use of metaphor in foreign language teaching.

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Reference