A Contrastive Study on Representation Types of Multimodal Metaphor in English and Chinese Advertisement Discourses

YANG Youwen[a],*

[a]School of Foreign Languages, University of Jinan, Jinan, Shandong, China.
*Corresponding author.

Abstract

Taking automobile advertisements as example and based on a self-established corpus, this paper conducts an English-Chinese contrastive study on representation types of multimodal metaphor. We find that English-Chinese representation types of multimodal metaphor show some similarities as well as differences, which may be closely related to the cognitive continuity and cultural diversity. The contrastive study testifies and enriches the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and facilitates the further development of advertising creativity approaches.

Key words: Advertisement discourse; Multimodal metaphor; Representation type; English-Chinese contrast

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of metaphor has gone through three stages: rhetorical metaphor, conceptual metaphor and multimodal metaphor. The field of metaphor research has also expanded from a single language to a variety of languages, such as advertising, comics, photography, dance, architecture, film, television, music, video games and gestures. As a matter of fact, the conceptual nature and cognitive function of metaphor determine that its research level is bound to cover a variety of genres, and its path is bound to involve a variety of modes. As the extension and expansion of conceptual metaphor, the main task of multimodal metaphor research is to systematically describe and interpret metaphors in different categories, and to construct a theoretical system in line with their distinctive characteristics. At the same time, it also verifies, complements and perfects the previous conceptual metaphor viewpoints from the text level.

Forceville (1996) divides the conceptual representation of image metaphor into four categories: pictorial metaphors with one pictorially present term (MP1s), pictorial metaphors with two pictorially present terms (MP2s), pictorial similes and verbo-pictorial metaphors (VPMs). This classification provides a prototype for the follow-up study of multimodal metaphor representation. From the perspective of system functional theory and mapping process, Feng Dezheng (2011) is made a comprehensive construction of the representation mode and representation system of multimodal metaphor, which provides a reference for the research of multimodal metaphor representation from multiple theoretical perspectives. On the basis of cognitive analysis of natural corpus, Yu Yanming (2013) divides the representation of multimodal metaphors in news comics into six categories, and for the first time brings "implied" mode into the representation system of multimodal metaphors. This new mode expands the representation scope of multimodal metaphor, and makes the classification standard of multimodal metaphor representation more rigorous and convincing.

Based on the previous research results, the discussion on the representation of multimodal metaphor is on the stage of comprehesive construction and interdisciplinary discussion, few scholars focus on the empirical research and cross-cultural research. In view of this, this study takes automobile print advertising discourse as an example, based on the contrast corpus, makes a comparative analysis of the similarites and differences of

multimodal metaphorical representation in English and Chinese, trying to reveal the similarities and differences of multimodal metaphorical representation in different cultural backgrounds and their causes.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

In view of the pictorial nature of multimodal metaphor, the current corpus technology can not recognize it automatically, so we adopt the method of artificial identification. To ensure the objective and accurate identification of metaphor, we use the double recognition method (that is, two people identify these metaphors according to the same recognition standard and record corresponding metaphorical expressions) to identify multimodal metaphors. After all corpus recognition is completed, we compare the results carefully, discuss the differences between the two and finally determine the identification results.

2.1 Research objects

We choose car print advertising as the research object. The construction of the corpus for this study has gone through the following steps: first, 392 English and Chinese automobile print ads were collected through Google and Baidu search engines with "(creative) automobile ads / (creative) car ads" as keywords; Secondly, according to the above-mentioned definition, characteristics and identification criteria of multimodal metaphor, print advertisements without metaphorical description are excluded, and then the corpus that fully meets the needs of this study is carefully screened out; Thirdly, the purpose of this study is to make a contrastive analysis of multimodal metaphorical representation between English and Chinese. The number of English and Chinese corpora is roughly equal, which is an important prerequisite for the smooth development of the study. Therefore, we finally determined that there are 69 English and Chinese corpora for car print advertising research.

2.2 Research Questions

As an extension of conceptual metaphor, we believe that multimodal metaphor should also show the characteristics of experiencing similarities and cultural differences. In view of this, this study focuses on the representation of multimodal metaphors in English and Chinese automobile graphic advertisements, and tries to answer the following two questions: first, what are the main representation types in English and Chinese automobile advertisements? Secondly, what are the similarities and differences in the representation of multimodal metaphors in English and Chinese automobile advertisements and what are the cognitive reasons behind them?

2.3 Research Methods

Shu dingfang (2001) argues that metaphor research should focuses on two points: one is to describe the phenomenon of metaphor, the other is to explain it in detail. Description is the precondition of explanation, and explanation is the ultimate purpose of description. This study mainly adopts the methods of description, comparison and explanation, trying to give consideration to the specific analysis and in-depth explanation of the deep reasons behind the similarities and differences while widely describing the corpus. Firstly, we describe the types of the main representations of English and Chinese multimodal metaphors, and count the number and proportion of each representation; Then, we use the method of comparison to find out the similarities and differences between English and Chinese multimodal metaphors; Finally, from the perspective of the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western ways of thinking, we explain the deep reasons behind the research results.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on the exhaustive analysis of the corpus and the different representation modes of the source domain and the target domain, the multi-modal metaphors in English and Chinese advertising can be divided into the seven types respectively. According to the convention, we use the first letter (or combination of letters) of the corresponding English word to express each representation mode. The verbal mode is represented by the letter "V", the pictorial mode by the letter "P", the verbal & pictorial mode is represented by the letter combination "VP", and the implied mode is represented by the symbol "○". In addition, the letter on the left side of the symbol "-" is corresponding to the representation mode of the source domain of multimodal metaphor, and the letter on the right side is corresponding to the representation mode of the target domain of multimodal metaphor. Therefore, the seven representation types of multimodal metaphors in English advertising discourse can be simplified as: P-V, P-VP, P -○, V-VP, V-P, VP-VP and ○-VP; The six representations of multimodal metaphor in Chinese advertising discourse can be abbreviated as: V-P, P-VP, P -○, VP-P, VP-VP, ○-VP. In order to make the expression clear and concise, we summarize the representation types of multimodal metaphors in English and Chinese advertising as Table 1.

As shown in Table 1, there are 31 cases of P-V representation types, accounting for 44.9%, so it is the main types of representation. In comparison, other six types of representation involve than 10 cases respectively, and the proportion is relatively small, so they are secondary types of representation.

As shown in Table 2, there are 35 cases of P-V representation types, accounting for 50.7%, so it is the main types of representation. In comparison, other six types of representation involve much less cases than P-V, and the proportion is relatively small, so they are secondary types of representation.

Table 1
Table of multimodal metaphorical representation types in English car print ads

Sequence	Source domain mode				Target domain mode				Number	Percent(%)
	P	V	VP	○	P	V	VP	○		
1	√					√			31	44.9
2	√						√		9	13.1
3	√							√	4	5.8
4		√					√		6	8.7
5		√			√				4	5.8
6			√				√		9	13.1
7				√			√		6	8.7

Table 2
Table of multimodal metaphorical representation types in Chinese car print ads

Sequence	Source domain mode				Target domain mode				Number	Percent(%)
	P	V	VP	○	P	V	VP	○		
1		√			√				35	50.7
2	√						√		11	15.9
3	√							√	6	8.7
4			√		√				7	10.2
5			√				√		8	11.6
6				√			√		2	2.9

4. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

After careful comparison and reflection, we find that there are two main similarities in the representation types of multimodal metaphors in English and Chinese automobile advertising texts: first, the distribution of the representation modes of the two shows a significant concentration trend; Secondly, the distribution of the representation modes of them presents a significant concentration trend. In addition, we also find two differences in the representation types of multimodal metaphors in English and Chinese automobile advertising texts: first, the main representation types of them are significantly different; Second, the significant level of their representation types is different.

4.1 Similarities of Representation Types in English and Chinese Advertising Texts

4.1.1 The Concentration Trend of Representation Types

As can be seen from the above two tables, the distribution of multimodal metaphorical representation types in English and Chinese advertising texts shows a significant concentration trend, which is manifested in the fact that both of them have a dominant number of representation types. We can use prototype category theory to explain this similarity. Wang Yin (2011) believes that category is the subjective generalization of the cognitive subject to the attributes of the external object, and it is the classification of the object based on the subjective and objective interaction. Prototype category refers to the category with "family similarity", that is, the category with prototype members and non prototype members. Prototype members refer to the cases with the clearest boundary and the most family resemblance at the center of the category, while non prototype members refer to the cases with the blur boundary and the weakest family resemblance at the edge of the category.

Prototype category theory is widely used in people's thinking operation and conceptual cognition. The representation types of multimodal metaphors in English and Chinese print advertising texts can be regarded as two independent prototype categories. All the representation types in this research are based on images and words, which are the most important similarities shared by all of the category members. The P-V and V-P representation types are only composed of the two modes ("P" and "V"), so they have the highest "family similarity", and they can be regarded as prototype members in the category of multimodal metaphorical representations in English and Chinese print advertisements respectively. Other representations are constructed by the combination of the two modes, and their "family similarity" is relatively weakened, Therefore, they can be regarded as non prototypical members of their respective prototype categories. In fact, in the two tables mentioned above, P-V and V-P respectively occupy the absolute dominant position in the number of multimodal metaphorical representations in English and Chinese, which coincides with the prototype category theory that "prototype members are often more common and the number is dominant".

4.1.2 The Concentration Trend of Representation Modes

This study involves four kinds of representation modes: verbal, pictorial, verbal-pictorial and implication. As shown in the above two tables, there are 44 pictorials and 10 verbals in the representation mode of English multimodal metaphor source domain, with 54 of them in total. While there are 9 verbal-pictorial and 6 implications,

with only 15 of them in total. In the representation mode of Chinese multimodal metaphor source domain, there are 35 verbals and 17 pictorials, with 52 of them in total. The number of verbal-pictorial and implications is 15 and 2 respectively, with 17 cases of them in total. From the above data, it can be seen that the source domain of English and Chinese multimodal metaphors is mainly represented by verbal mode and pictorial mode, while the use of verbal-pictorial mode and implication mode is relatively limited. Therefore, we can draw the conclusion that in the representation of the source domain of multimodal metaphor in English and Chinese, verbal and pictorial are the main modes, while verbal-pictorial and implication are the secondary modes.

The above conclusions are mainly related to the representation characteristics of each mode. Zhu Quanguo (2013) claims that the advantage of verbal expression lies in the large amount of information, which can ensure the full transmission of emotion and indirectness. The disadvantage is that it is difficult to produce specific images in the readers' mind, which leads to its expression blur. The advantage of pictorial expression lies in its simplicity, openness and relatively accurate realism. The disadvantage lies in its difficulty to produce sufficient emotional tension and trigger the psychological association of the audience. Almost all the construction of print advertisements cannot be separated from the joint participation of verbals and pictorials. The two representation modes have their own distinctive characteristics while present a complementary trend. Compared with pictorials and verbals, the representation of verbal-pictorial mode tend to be too direct, which is not conducive to the achievement of ingenious creativity, and is not conducive to effectively stimulate the reader's psychological association mechanism. The representation of implication mode tend to be too obscure, which is not conducive to the accurate presentation of information, and is not conducive to the correct guidance or even misleading readers' metaphor reasoning. It can be seen that verbals and pictorials have become the common preferred representation modes of multimodal metaphors in English and Chinese advertisements.

4.2 Differences of Representation Types in English and Chinese Advertising

4.2.1 Difference of Main Representation Types
The data analysis of the above two tables shows that: in the multimodal metaphorical representation of Chinese advertising discourse, the number of V-P occupies an absolute advantage and is the main representation type. On the contrary, in the multimodal metaphorical representation of English advertising discourse, P-V is the dominant one, which is quite different from Chinese. From the perspective of specific representation mode of concept domain, the source domain of Chinese advertising multimodal metaphor is mainly respresented by verbal mode, and the target domain is mainly respresnsted by pictorial mode. However, the source domain and target domain are represented by different modes respectively in English advertisements. We believe that this difference mainly derives from the different structures of written characters between English and Chinese. Liu Changlin(2008) argues that Chinese characters originated from image thinking and belong to the category of hieroglyphics, with the obvious feature being as an unity of sound, form and meaning. Chinese characters employ form to understand meaning and the characters tend to have direct access to meaning. On the other hand, the full ideographic and intuitive nature of Chinese characters can fully enlighten thinking and trigger association, so that the traditional image thinking and overall thinking of Chinese people can be further consolidated and expanded. As a consquent, the pictographic nature of Chinese characters can provide a solid image foundation and cognitive foundation for metaphor mapping and interpretation, and the verbal ought to become the main representation mode of the source domain of multimodal metaphor. In addition, the pictorial mode can clearly present the target domain of multimodal metaphor (the car in this research), and accurately receive and anchor the metaphorical mapping content from the source domain to the target domain. Therefore, V-P representation type becomes an ideal choice for multimodal metaphor representation of Chinese print advertising.

On the contrary, English is a kind of phonetic alphabet with hypotaxis as the main form, and its order of meaning expression is usually from words to sounds and then to meaning. As Guo Fuqiang (2007) said, "in the meaning expression system of English language, as the symbols, writing words have less important than phonetics." As a result, although there is sufficient abstraction and logic between English words and concrete things, while imagery and intuition is insufficient, which means connection between words and things they refers to is so blur. The source domain is the trigger of metaphor mapping, and it is the beginning of deep understanding of the inner meaning of metaphor. The accurate representation determines whether the psychological process of the audience's understanding of multimodal metaphor can proceed smoothly. English words that emphasize hypotaxis and neglect parataxis can't carry enough meaning information, so they can't effectively activate the mental space of the audience, and they can't start their reasonable psychological operation, so they should't be the best choice for the source of multimodal metaphor.

Since the English verbal is not conducive to the vivid presentation of the original domain, the pictorial becomes the best choice of its representation mode. Pictorail mode has the characteristics of vivid expression, rich implication and strong appeal, which can provide rich material selection and image source for the sourcel domain of multimodal metaphor, which is further conducive to the individual expression of

advertising creators and the ingenious transmission of good quality of goods. Thus, P-V naturally becomes the main representation type of multimodal metaphor in English print advertisements.

4.2.2 Different Significance of Representation Types

Pictorial, verbal, pictorial-verbal and implication have their own characteristics respectively, anyone of which can be used to represent the source or target domain of multimodal metaphor. However, the significance of their meaning representation (which can also be understood as the amount of mental energy and the length of time required by the viewer to understand metahpor meaning) is different. If we rank the significance of the four modal representations in descending order, the order is pictorial-verbal (most significant), pictorial (significant), verbal (more significant) and implication (least significant). The representation types of multimodal metaphor in this research consists of the above four kinds of representation modes, so we can also rank the corresponding representation types according to their significance. Among all the representation types, VP-VP is the most dominant one, while○-○ is the weakest one. According to this method, we can rank the representation types of English and Chinese multimodal metaphors in the following order (from left to right, the significance of these types is in descending order).

Significance of representation types in English multimodal metaphor：

VP-VP (9), P-VP (9), P-V (31), V-VP (6), V-P (4), P-○ (4), ○- VP (6).

Significance of representation types in Chinese multimodal metaphor:

VP- VP (8), VP-P (7), P –VP (11), V-P (35), P-○ (6), ○-VP (2).

We find that the number of the first three representation types is far greater than that of the last four (the number in brackets is the number of each representation type), so the representation types tend to have much higher significance of meaning representation in English multimodal metaphor. In contrast, the significance of Chinese multimodal metaphorical representation is much lower, which is showed by the fact that the total number of the last three representation types is more than that of the first three. We believe that the significant differences in the representation of multimodal metaphors between English and Chinese are mainly due to the great differences in the way of thinking between China and the West. Xu Yulong (2002) claims that Westerners attach importance to abstraction and individuality in their thinking process, the boundary between things is obvious, and the way of language expression is clear, which makes their language and culture have the characteristics of "manifestation" in form and meaning. On the contrary, Chinese people pay more attention to concreteness and wholeness, the relationship between things is relatively vague, and the expression of language and culture tend to be blur, which makes their language and culture more "invisible" in form and meaning.

5. CONCLUSION

The study of multimodal metaphor is an inevitable extension of the development of conceptual metaphor. The multi-modal representation is one of its distinguishing features, which is also the focus of related researches. Taking car print ads as the subject, this study makes a contrastive analysis of the representation types of multimodal metaphors in English and Chinese. The results show that both the representation modes and the representation types of English and Chinese multimodal metaphors tend to be concentrated, however their main representation types are quite different. There are also clear differences in the expressive significance of multimodal metaphors between English and Chinese. Fundamentally speaking, the similarities of English and Chinese metaphorical representations originate from the cognitive homogeneity of metaphorical thinking, while the differences between them originate from the cultural heterogeneity of metaphorical thinking.

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