Multimodal Metaphors and Its Application in Second Language Teaching: Illustrated by Example of Vocabulary Teaching and Writing Teaching

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Abstract

This thesis introduces multimodal metaphors and views some important concepts such as modes, form of multimodal metaphors and difference between monomodal metaphor and multimodal metaphors. We analyze the present problem in vocabulary teaching and writing teaching and propose that multimodal metaphors will prove a new guide for vocabulary teaching and writing teaching. Therefore, we believe that it is necessary to further explore the significance of multimodal metaphors in second language teaching.

Key words: Multimodal metaphors; Modes; Vocabulary teaching; Writing teaching; Second language teaching

INTRODUCTION

Since the publication of Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) has dominated metaphor studies. As a way of human thinking and behavior as well as an important means of understanding the objective word, metaphor has attracted much academic attention in the past 30 years (Ortony, 1979; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Shu, 2000; Hu, 2004; Liu, 2007). Cognitive metaphor theory (CMT) has amply argued that we do not only write and speak but, more importantly, actually think in metaphors. If this tenet of CMT is correct, metaphor should necessarily manifest itself not just in language but also in other modes of communication, such as pictures, music, sounds, and gestures. A limitation of the work by CMT researchers is that they have almost exclusively restricted their investigations to language and paid little attention to non-verbal manifestations of conceptual metaphor. To this end, Forcevill (1996) proposed multimodal metaphor theory which assumed that metaphor should not only exist in the language, because language is just one means of conveying human concepts, other means or media, such as sound, visuals, gestures, color, lines, etc., may also be used to construct and express conceptual metaphor.

A multimodal metaphor here is defined as a metaphor whose target and source are not, or not exclusively, rendered in the same mode (Forcecille, 2007). He firstly studied static visual metaphor, indicating that the audience can recognize it through interaction of image and text. Subsequently, studies involving dynamic multimodal metaphor of sound and music, and he noted that music plays an important role in constructing multimodal metaphor. Recently, domestic scholars have made some researches on multimodal metaphor. Zhao (2011) systematically reviewed the findings of studies of multimodal metaphors; Feng (2011) systematically describes the construction of pictorial metaphor and multimodal metaphor from systematic foundational linguistics perspectives. Except for Li and Shi (2010), Liang (2013) discussed the application of multimodal metaphor in second language teaching. Most studies are mainly concerned with description of manifestations of multimodal metaphors. In this thesis, we are trying to explore the significant meaning of multimodal metaphors in second language teaching by present application of multimodal metaphors in teaching of writing and vocabulary teaching.

As we all know, English vocabulary is in a process of changing. New words are producing all the time.

However, most of these new words are the old ones we are familiar with, they are given the new meanings. Metaphors contribute a lot. Vocabulary is not matter of language and contains many elements of culture, thus, it is a complex and dynamic process. Vocabulary is not stored only in the form of a text, but also in the form of movement, sound, images and so on. Therefore, the process of vocabulary learning is in multimodal nature.

On one hand, writing is both based on language and thinking, on the other hand, writing is a dynamic process which has a kin relationship with writers' social experience. We believe that multimodal metaphors provide an enlightening idea for the teaching of English writing.

We propose that multimodal metaphor can provide a new guide for vocabulary teaching and teaching of writing, further in second language teaching.

This thesis is of both theoretical and practical significance. As for theoretical, it make a comprehensive introduction of multimodal metaphor theory, especially for second language study. As for technique has changed the nature of class and the process of teaching, multimodal is becoming the tendency. The nature of English vocabulary requires us to catch up with its dramatic change, metaphors is an essential tool. In a word, we hope to provide a new theoretical guide for vocabulary teaching.

If the language structure compared to the skeleton of language, then the language vocabulary provides important organs and flesh (Harmer, 1990, p.158). Britain's famous linguist D. A.Wilkins had a brilliant exposition: "There is no grammar, people can express a lot of things, but without words, people cannot express anything" (Wilkins 1972, p.48). Thus, the vocabulary is an important integral part of the language. Vocabulary teaching is an important component of English teaching system.

For English learners, learning vocabulary is the most annoyed hurdle in their language study process. Most of them are still struggling with rote learning. While traditional learning methods fail to deal with words with multiple meanings and idioms. This thesis tries to find an effective way to this problem by applying multimodal metaphor theory to words learning.

In second language writing, from integrating different writing methods to introduce foreign writing teaching method, it is hard to find a best way to solve learners' difficulty. By applying multimodal metaphors, we believe it will inspire learners and give a new guidance for language teacher.

1. MULTIMODAL METAPHORS

Multimodal metaphors research began in the late 1990s, a group of scholars represented by Forceville believe that since the concept of metaphor is a way of thinking, metaphor should necessarily manifest itself not just in language but also in other modes of communication, such as pictures, music, sounds, and gestures (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009, p.4; Zhao 2011, p.2). Simultaneously, in China, the multimodal metaphor research is just emerging. Zhao (2011) systematically reviewed the findings of studies of multimodal metaphors; Feng (2011) systematically describes the construction of pictorial metaphor and multimodal metaphor from systematic foundational linguistics perspectives. Li and Shi (2010), Liang (2013) discussed the application of multimodal metaphor in second language teaching. So far in this area in addition to review papers and case studies papers, there have been more than two multimodal metaphor studies for teaching. This thesis will further explore the significance of multimodal metaphor in vocabulary teaching. The literature review will focus on its basic concepts such as definition, its manifestation, constituents and so on.

1.1 Definition of "Mode"

In order to distinguish multimodal metaphor from monomodal metaphor, it should first be further clarified what is meant by "mode". This is no easy task, because what is labelled a mode here is a complex of various factors. As a first approximation, let us say that a mode is a sign system interpretable because of a specific perception process. Acceptance of this approach would link modes one-on-one to the five senses, so that we would arrive at the following list: (a) the pictorial or visual mode; (b) the aural or sonic mode; (c) the olfactory mode; (d) the gustatory mode; and (e) the tactile mode. However, this is too crude a categorization. For instance, the sonic mode under this description lumps together spoken language, music, and non-verbal sound. Similarly, both written language and gestures would have to be part and parcel of the visual, since one cannot hear, smell, taste, or touch either conventionally written language or gestures (although a blind person can feel Braille language and, by touch, perceive certain gestures— for instance those of a statue). If justice is to be done to these distinctions (between images and gestures, between spoken and written language, between spoken language, sounds, and music), other factors need to be taken into account, such as the manner of production (e.g., printed versus Braille letters in relief on paper; signs made with parts of the body versus signs whose use is governed by the grammar and vocabulary rules of a natural language). There are other problematic issues. For instance, what is music and what "mere" sound may differ from one culture, or period, to another. Similarly, it is impossible to assess objectively where music shades off into sound effect. And is "typeface" to be considered an element of writing, of visuals, or of both? In short, it is at this stage impossible to give either a satisfactory definition of

"mode," or compile an exhaustive list of modes. However, this is no obstacle for postulating that there are different modes and that these include, at least, the following: (a) pictorial signs; (b) written signs; (c) spoken signs; (d) gestures; (e) sounds; (f) music (g) smells; (h) tastes; (i) touch.

1.2 Concept of Multimodal Metaphors

"Multimodal metaphors" are metaphors whose target and source are each represented exclusively or predominantly in different modes (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009). It is mainly achieved through visual and auditory modality modal, and the use of physical form of text, images, sound words, music, non-verbal sounds, gestures and so on. Depending on the type of resort sensory, multimodal visual metaphors can be divided into static and dynamic multimodal metaphors (Zhao & Su, 2010). Static visual metaphors mainly related images, language and other visual symbols. Dynamic multimodal metaphors consist of a variety of heterogeneous media. TV commercials, movies more adopt dynamic multimodal metaphors.

1.3 Multimodal Metaphors Versus Monomodal Metaphors

Contrast to multimodal metaphor, momnomodal metaphors refers to metaphors whose target and source are exclusively or predominantly rendered in one mode. A type of monomodal metaphor that has more recently become the subject of sustained research is pictorial or visual metaphor. To distinguish monomodal metaphors from multimodal metaphors, Forceville give a good example:

Imagine somebody wants to cue, for whatever reason, the metaphor CAT IS ELEPHANT pictorially in an animation film. She could do this for instance by depicting the cat with a trunk-like snout and large flapping ears; by showing the cat with a canopy on its back in which a typical Indian elephant rider is seated; by juxtaposing cat and elephant in the same salient pose; or by letting the cat behave (for instance: move) in an elephant-like manner. These variants would constitute monomodal metaphors of the pictorial kind, featuring hybrid, contextual, simile, and integrated subtypes respectively (see Forceville, 1996, 2002b, 2005a) —and of course these subtypes could be combined. Now imagine the producer wishes to cue the same metaphor multimodally. She could for instance have the cat make a trumpeting sound or have another cat shout "elephant!" to the first one (note that this is not a case of synaesthesia, since there is no conflation of the two domains). In these cases the source domain ELEPHANT would be triggered in two modes (sound and language, respectively) that are different from the target (visuals). By this token, the metaphor would be truly multimodal. But, as in the case of the visual mode alone, the producer would of course not have to choose between any of these modes: She could depict the cat with a trunk-like snout

and large ears and have it trumpet, and have another cat shout "elephant"! In this case, the source is cued in three modes simultaneously, only one of these (namely: the visual) exemplifying the same mode as the target. In such a case, I propose to label the metaphor multimodal (Forceville, 2009).

However, it is hard to give a definition in practical analysis. In fact, the multimodal metaphors can have broad and narrow sense. The definition above is narrow one which respectively strictly analyzes the mode of source domain and target domain. While, in broad speaking, multimodal metaphor can be briefly defines as metaphors whose source and target are represented in different modes. In this thesis, we adopt the broad sense of multimodal metaphor.

2. MULTIMODAL METAPHORS AND SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

In this section, we will present specific studies about multimodal metaphors' application in vocabulary teaching and writing, and then discuss advantages of multimodal metaphors.

2.1 Multimodal Metaphors in Vocabulary Teaching

2.1.1 Historical Development of Vocabulary Teaching

As an integral part of language teaching, vocabulary teaching is changing along with the development of pedagogy. In each period, it owns its characteristics. Historically, the development can be divided into two periods: before the 1990s and after 1990s.

2.1.1.1 Before the 1990s the Development of Vocabulary Teaching

(a) Vocabulary teaching in the grammar translation method period

The grammar translation method is popular in Europe from 1840 to 1940 and has been the dominant method in foreign language teaching. The main purpose of grammar translation method is to cultivate learners' reading ability, especially to read classical literature. Its teaching process is to explain and analyze the sentence composition and pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar rules. Learning a foreign language is mainly by translating language into the target language, grammar rules and vocabulary memorization, and through a lot of grammar translation exercises to strengthen memory. For vocabulary teaching, teachers read aloud the words aloud first, and then translate them into native language, then use these words in a sentence or doing translation exercises. Consequently, learners learn a lot of words but may not know how to use.

(b) Vocabulary teaching in direct teaching method period

In the late of 20th, people are aware of the weak ability in speaking and direct teaching method appears. It

strongly rejects the use of native language and advocates that second language learners can adopt first language learning method by imitation. In the direct teaching method teaching procedure, teachers should use pictures, models and illustration to teach words. However, it is hard both for teachers and student to explain and grasp the abstract words.

(c) Vocabulary teaching in audio-lingual teaching method period

Audio-lingual teaching method is theoretically based on structural linguistics and behavioral psychology. It advocates developing language learning habits in the process of "stimulus-response". Imitation and mechanical strengthening exercises are two main methods. Language teaching is focused on sentence pattern drills and vocabulary learning is on the premise of sentence learning, thus vocabulary is affiliated to sentence. While, learners still cannot use these sentences in the appropriate situations. It is finally replaced by communication teaching method and method in the cognitive perspective.

(d) Vocabulary teaching in cognitive approach period

Cognitive approach is based on psycholinguistics. Cognitive Psychology advocate of foreign language learning is a perception, memory, thinking, imagination process, learning the language is not by stimulus-response-strengthening process, but rather the result of positive thinking.

Early cognitive psychologist Jean Piaget believed that learning is a dynamic process of construction. Bruner emphasizes on mastering basic knowledge structure and the use of discovery methods. Ausubel advocates meaningful learning, attention to understand the basic concepts and rules. Therefore, intellectual factor in the development, positive thinking, mobilization, initiative, enthusiasm to inspire learners intrinsic motivation to learn, to help learners master the science of learning, to develop good study habits are emphasize in cognitive approach. However, it does not change the dominant role of grammar translation teaching method.

(e) Vocabulary teaching in communicating teaching method period

Based on sociolinguistics, communicating teaching method emphasizes function of language and the how to use language in society. Social communicative function is the most important function of language. Hymes (1972) proposed "communicative competence" concept. In his view, it is not enough to learn a language, what is more important is to know how to use it and grasp communicative ability. As for vocabulary teaching, it believes that words can be acquired in the procedure of listening and reading. Learners are still learning words by rote memorizing and teachers are only responsible for checking. Vocabulary teaching is in the second place of language teaching and not got enough attention.

2.1.1.2 After the 1990s the Development of Vocabulary Teaching

(a) Lexical approach

From previous studies, it is easy to find out current methods of teaching English focus too much on grammar and not enough on lexis. Lewis (1993) states that "the basis of language is lexis. It has been, and remains, the central misunderstanding of language teaching to assume that grammar is the basis of language and that mastery of the grammatical system is a prerequisite for effective communication" (p.133). Lewis also notes that "error is not only not to be avoided, but is an essential part of the learning process. The Lexical Approach totally rejects the Present-Practice-Produce paradigm advocated within a behaviourist learning model; it is replaced by the Observe-Hypothesize-Experiment cyclical paradigm" (p.6). Lewis feels that the latter paradigm is essential if learners are to become proficient at perceiving patterns of lexis and collocation in English. Finally, he is convinced that integrating a focus on lexis with the communicative approach will allow learners to produce successful language much sooner and build their confidence as language learners.

(b) Incidental vocabulary learning

Many words must have been "picked up" during listening and reading activities while the listener's or reader's goal was to comprehend the meaning of the language heard or read, rather than to learn new words. This picking up is usually referred to as incidental learning. Incidental learning can only be defined in negative terms as the accidental learning of information without the intention of remembering that information (Hulstijn, 1989; Schmidt, 1994).

Incidental vocabulary learning has attracted researchers' attention. We believe that for language learners, they cannot learn well with either of incidental vocabulary learning or intentional learning. They are complementary to each other. As for high-frequency words, obviously, should be the focus of intentional learning and low-frequency words can be resolved through incidental vocabulary learning. As for collocation, it is acquired through contacting with a lot of material in incidental learning. Pronunciation and spelling need to be learned deliberately.

2.1.2 U.S. President Barack Obama's First Inauguration Speech in Sign Language

Gesture is an important mode for human presenting meaning. Gesture is not only visual but a visual-spatial mode synthesis, or a motor sign. Speech refers to speakers, in pubic place, clear and complete express their opinions on a specific issue, by means of language in the assistance of body language. Gesture is a set of specific language system which set up with palm and finger position, shape. McNeill (1992) believes that gestures can be divided into four types: iconics, metaphorics, deictics

and beats. Metaphorical gesture refers to the expression of abstract concepts, and those gestures can be explained on the source domain.

To ensure objectivity in metaphorical gesture recognition, we adopt Charteris-Black's (2004) idea which overt and conscious as two characters in metaphorical selection in political discourse. In the process of expressing their political views and positions, speakers in addition to use explicit language metaphor as metaphor keywords, they have to be assisted by gestures. Therefore, we will from the metaphor keywords to recognize metaphoric gestures. Metaphor keywords refer to metaphor which reflects general conceptual metaphors, such as path, step, and milestone and so on.

In the Obama's first inauguration speech, the first metaphor keyword is "path". (See Figure 1)

Figure 1
U.S. President Barack Obama's First Inauguration Speech in Sign Language

Obama says: "The path towards sustainable energy source will be long and difficult. But, America cannot resist this transition, we must lead it". It contains metaphor: "Economic construction is a path". In the process of construction, American will confront both success and failure. Obama puts his palm upward means bright and positive aspect of economic construction, while, he holds his hand tight means Americas should hand in hand when faced with difficulties. Then his hand holds back and he pinches his fingers means Americas cannot destroy the path, or stopped the economic construction. He finally stretches out both of his hands and says: "We must lead it". The hands point forward means that in the process of economical construction, people should lead the path and faithfully lead the construction.

2.2 Multimodal Metaphors in Writing Teaching

Currently Western writing teaching methods include product approach, genre analysis and process approach. In recent years, three are three trends in writing teaching. First, some researchers propose to integrate various approaches (Bradger & White, 2000; Liu, 2009).

Integrated method in some degree proves learners' writing, but the problem of writing still exists. Second, researchers according to learners' writing problem, through case study or analysis of corpus, tend to find solution and writing strategy (Wang & Chen, 2008; Yang & Wang, 2012). Recently, researches resort to cognitive method. They take writer cognition into consideration. Most of them explore feasibility of cognitive theory in writing teaching (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Yang, 2008).

On one hand, writing is both based on language and thinking, on the other hand, writing is a dynamic process which has a kin relationship with writers' social experience. We believe that multimodal metaphors provide an enlightening idea for the teaching of English writing. The following is a specific example on how to write a better analogic composition with assistance of multimodal metaphors.

If you make or draw an analogy between two things, you show that they are similar in some way. But, sometimes, it seems not so easy for learners to make analogy. Picture is an important form of multimodal metaphors. Pictures can inspire learners to find similarity though seemly different things and explore the profound meaning. For example, set "Responsibility and Obligation" as the topic.
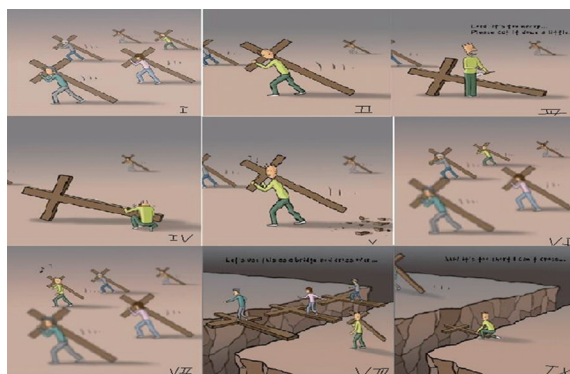

Figure 2
Responsibility and Obligation

Everyone saddled with a heavy cross, in the slow and difficult progress toward the destination. This picture reflects the conceptual metaphor "responsibility is cross", but also contains "life is journey" concept metaphor. In addition, responsibility and cross form an analogy for they are both difficult to bear. The story goes on and the cross is given a deep meaning. In the picture, a boy in yellow finds it so hard to carry on, so he decides to cut down the cross. Successfully, he becomes the first one in the team until he confront gully. People are slowly to catch up. They use their own cross to bridge the gully and cross it leisurely. The boy is the only one to be left. Here it reflects the conceptual metaphor "difficulty is gully". In the end, the words presented in the picture are very thought-provoking. In fact, each of us every day is burdened with a variety of crosses and has to go forward. It may be our

study, or job, perhaps our emotions, or the responsibility and obligation that we must undertake. However, it is responsibility and obligation that consists of the values and reasons existed in the world. So don't complain about it, for happiness is experiencing. We will never experience joy until we suffer.

By means of multimodal, "responsibility is the cross", the conceptual metaphor is vividly represented. It also outlines clearly the meaning of the cross with the responsibility by analogy.

2.3 Advantages of Multimodal Metaphor in Second Language Teaching

In sum, the application of multimodal metaphors in second language teaching is significant.

Firstly, pictures sound and gestures, compared with language, have a better advantage in expression. Through multimodal metaphors, learners gain a better understanding and deeper impression.

Secondly, multimodal metaphors obtain various choices on exploring resemblance between target domain and source domain. Sometimes, it is not easy for learners to find similarities or to explore the profound meaning only through language, while pictures and gestures make it possible for them to grasp.

Thirdly, to some extent, pictures, sound, and music and so on, they are more universal than language. Thus, multimodal metaphors are more acceptable.

Finally, multimodal metaphors have a stronger emotional impact, such as the writing teaching example. Through a serious conceptual metaphor, learners grasp a more comprehensive understanding about "responsibility and obligation".

CONCLUSION

This thesis brings in the concept of multimodal metaphors in, trying to further explore the important role of multimodal metaphors played in second language teaching , which illustrated by the example of vocabulary teaching and writing teaching. Multimodal metaphors are capable of inspiring and enlightening learners for many reasons. For instance, pictures sound and gestures, compared with language, have a better advantage in expression. Through multimodal metaphors, learners gain a better understanding and deeper impression; multimodal metaphors obtain various choices on exploring resemblance between target domain and source domain; multimodal metaphors have a stronger emotional impact; to some extent, pictures, sound, and music and so on, they are more universal than language. Thus, multimodal metaphors are more acceptable.

Researches have proved the important role of metaphor both theoretically and empirically. Multimodal metaphors as a new comer for second language teaching need more researches to verify.

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