

Discussion on the Application of Metaphor in English Culture Teaching

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ABSTRACT

As a language phenomenon and cognitive mechanism, metaphor is rooted in culture and is a part of culture, reflecting the content of culture. Through the cultural nature of metaphors, people can see the commonality and particularity of cultures in different countries. This article starts with the relationship between metaphor and culture, analyzes the current status of culture teaching, and puts forward some suggestions to strengthen the application of metaphor in culture teaching.

Keywords: metaphor, culture teaching, language

I. INTRODUCTION

Metaphor is not just a rhetorical device, a language phenomenon, but also a cognitive mechanism of human beings. Cognitive linguistics believes that metaphor is a kind of thinking mechanism, which is the brain processing and cognitive process that people use the experience of a familiar field to know and understand the phenomena of other fresh or abstract fields. Lakoff and Johnson believe that metaphor is everywhere in daily life, not only in language, but also in thought and behavior. The daily conceptual system of people's thinking and action is basically metaphorical in nature. Metaphor in language is the product of metaphorical thinking process. Metaphorical thinking ability is a kind of creative thinking ability produced along with the development of people's cognition, which is an indispensable cognitive ability for human cognitive world, especially abstract things.

An important training goal of foreign language teaching is to cultivate communicative competence. And an important aspect of communicative competence is cultural competence, which enables learners to freely control language and communicate fully in the cultural world of the target language. If you don't understand the target language culture and the human values, social orientation, historical origins and communication rules that are closely related to the target language culture, it will cause barriers to understanding and then lead to communication failure. Therefore, cultural content must be taught in foreign language teaching.

II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN METAPHOR AND CULTURE

Language carries rich cultural information, and any cultural change and development will leave a deep

mark on the language system. Metaphor is rooted in language, thinking and culture. It is the accumulation of culture and experience of a language community, and the concentrated expression of culture in language. Metaphor itself is a component of culture, a kind of concentrated essence of national culture, which can reflect the bits and pieces of culture. As an important linguistic phenomenon, metaphor is closely related to national culture. Naturally, it contains rich and vivid cultural meanings. Each metaphor carries strong cultural information and contains strong cultural characteristics, which is the most sensitive and fragile part of the development and change of national culture in language. [1]

A. Metaphor is rooted in culture and embodies culture

Metaphor is rooted in the culture of a nation and largely reflects the content of the culture, such as overall social values, religious beliefs, aesthetic orientation, etc. As a basic way for humans to recognize and construct the world, metaphor is based on people's own experience and life experience, and this kind of experience is formed in a specific social and cultural environment, which implicitly affects people's way of thinking and cognition, and ultimately restricts the generation of metaphorical concepts. [2] For example, in ancient Chinese culture, because snakes often appear in the shadowy and damp places and their shapes are soft and twisted, they are often used as metaphors for women. However, in Western culture, snakes are thought to represent shrewd and cunning because they approach without casting a shadow, leave without leaving a trace, and move secretly.

The conceptual system of metaphor is consistent with the basic concept of culture and reflects culture. China has a vast territory and is also a country with a large population. For thousands of years, it has

basically been a country dominated by agriculture. People in China depend on heaven for food, and solving the problem of food and clothing is a major event for people. In the process of solving the problem of food, a food culture with Chinese characteristics has also been formed. The "吃"(chi) culture has left a deep mark on the Chinese language. "'吃' is to bear and to gain". This metaphor system is reflected in the following: "吃惊 (surprised)", "吃官司 (be sued)", "吃不消 (be unable to stand)", "吃不住 (be unable to bear or support)", "吃罪不起 (dare not provoke)", "吃软不吃硬 (can be persuaded by reason but not be cowed by force)", "不吃那一套 (refuse to accept)", "吃一堑长一智 (be bought a lesson)", "吃香 (be very popular)", "吃亏 (suffer losses)", "吃苦头 (have a rough time)", "吃冤枉 (be treated unjustly)", "吃得开 (be popular)", "吃里扒外 (live on sb. while helping others secretly)", "吃工资 (depend on salary)", "吃利息 (earn interest)", "吃国家 (people who work in state organs and are paid by the state or local finances)". [3]

B. Culture influences the formation and development of metaphor

Metaphoric thinking and metaphorical conceptual systems originate from life experience, which must be carried out in a specific social and cultural environment. Without this cultural environment, metaphors can't be formed. This is because metaphor is based on concepts, and people often use concrete or familiar things or experiences to understand more abstract concepts. Many important concepts are derived from cultural experience, so they are restricted by culture. Different cultural backgrounds can have different metaphorical thinking and interpretation of the same new or abstract things.

At the same time, metaphor also develops with the development of social culture. Some are abandoned and forgotten, while some are more active. The most typical example is the concept metaphor of "Life is a drama". Due to the influence of television and the Internet, the lives of the younger generation have changed dramatically, and life is more like drama. In their lives, they apply this metaphor to the fullest. A study shows that the self of modern young people in public is not consistent with their true self when they are with relatives and friends. They learn to hide their real self and learn to act. Such as:

You need to psych up for performance, but keep cool during them.

You need to get it together and clean up your act so you can come on strong and come off the way you want to.

In the sentence, "psych up" means "being prepared psychologically and acting well"; "keep cool" means "being unaffected by other events, showing personal joys and sorrows"; "get it together" means "being

prepared to mobilize all the factors that guarantee the success of the show at the same time"; "clean up your act" means "coming to the rescue"; "come on strong" means "successfully completing the show"; "come off the way you want to" means "performing in the desired way". These expressions related to theatrical performances are used by young people in daily life to highlight the theatricality. [4]

III. THE CURRENT STATUS OF CULTURE TEACHING

At present, there are two main ways of teaching culture in foreign language teaching in China. The first is that teachers explain some of the cultural phenomena that appear in the text, such as most courses in college English and English majors. The second is to teach through courses such as country profiles, literature, and poetry for English majors. But the teaching effect of both is not very satisfactory. The former taught cultural knowledge is relatively fragmented and lacks systematicness, which is likely to cause confusion. The latter often lacks depth, only stays in the list or description of the facts of high-level culture (such as literature, art, history, etc.), and can't discover deep-level cultural content (such as values, behavior patterns, etc.), which is out of step between culture teaching and language teaching, restricting language teaching to a certain extent. [5] The introduction of metaphor teaching methods in culture teaching can just make up for this deficiency. Culture teaching through metaphors can not only improve students' language use ability and target language thinking ability, but also enhance their cultural awareness.

IV. WAYS TO STRENGTHEN THE APPLICATION OF METAPHOR IN CULTURE TEACHING

A. Carrying out cultural teaching step by step

According to Hanvey's sensitivity to cultural differences, culture teaching should be divided into three stages: elementary, intermediate and advanced. The elementary stage mostly reveals the cultural background and semantics of the vocabulary related to the surface culture. The intermediate stage focuses on cultural customs. The advanced stage lays particular stress on knowledge and culture, and should focus on improving cultural awareness and cultural literacy. In the elementary stage, teachers can guide students to learn metaphor at the vocabulary level, especially the use of polyseme. Students should be guided to understand the cultural background knowledge hidden and revealed during the evolution of vocabulary. For example, the word formation of the English vocabulary "handicap" is compounded by "hand in cap". This word is derived from a very old form of exchanging article by article: "hand in cap". When the two need to exchange

article by article, they ask an umpire to make sure that the party with the smaller value should compensate the other party, and finally decide whether to close the deal by stretching out his hand into a hat. By the late 17th century, there was a horse racing event in England that was arranged according to this principle, that is, the referee decided to load the stronger horses with extra weight, so as to equalize a fine match and equal opportunities. So its meaning is extended from "exchanging article by article" to "horse racing". Then "handicap" was naturally extended to refer to all kinds of "obstacles" or "adverse conditions" and then was used as verbs, meaning "to obstruct" or "to make ... unfavorable". The past participle "handicapped" was widely used as a euphemism, referring to "disabled". The intermediate stage should focus on studying cultural customs, learning the contrast of cultural differences between English and Chinese metaphors, and digging the root causes of the differences. The advanced stage should focus on the introduction of metaphorical knowledge, such as the relationship between metaphor and thinking or metaphor and culture or knowledge, and how to understand culture through metaphor and so on.

The step-by-step teaching also needs to be from concrete to abstract, from the same to the difference and from simple to complex. For example, when teaching the metaphor of "Love is journey", teachers can teach those metaphor parts that can be directly translated into Chinese, and then on this basis, focus on explaining the metaphors that are different from Chinese, and analyze the cultural differences behind these metaphor differences from a deep level. This is because the same part of metaphor is based on the common cognitive experience of human beings, which is easy to understand, remember and apply. Based on this and then learning the different parts, you can get twofold results with half the effort. The assimilation of new knowledge with existing knowledge is a universal law of human learning.

B. Cultivating students' habits of metaphorical thinking and encouraging students to use creative metaphors

To cultivate students' cultural awareness and English thinking, teachers must help students understand and bridge the gap between the metaphorical cognitive mechanisms of the mother tongue and the target language.[6] Teachers should enable students to understand the metaphorical cognitive mechanism unique to the target language and learn the language manifestation of this mechanism. In teaching, teachers need to first make students realize the ubiquitous nature of metaphor in language, and gradually cultivate their metaphorical thinking habits, and apply this habit to the learning of target language vocabulary, phrases, sentences, paragraphs and chapters.

Secondly, it is necessary to guide students to discover and arrange deep cultural content through surface language phenomena, and cultivate their independent thinking and learning ability.

In addition to guiding students to use standardized language, they should also be encouraged to apply creative metaphors. To create a metaphor for similarity, it is necessary to use rich imagination and metaphorical thinking mechanisms on the basis of fully understanding the culture and mastering the language, break through the traditional conceptual shackles and connect things that seem to be unrelated. Shakespeare, a famous British dramatist, has used his rich imagination to creatively use metaphors in his works, leaving many invaluable treasures for English literature and culture. Encouraging students to try to use novel metaphors can broaden their thinking, inspire inspiration and improve their language comprehension ability and application level.

C. Combining metaphorical culture teaching with language teaching

The current language teaching in China is centered on teaching students to use language correctly, but it doesn't guide students how to appreciate and use metaphors flexibly. Metaphorical culture teaching must be combined with language teaching. In the teaching of metaphor culture, in addition to explaining the metaphorical phenomena and thinking involved in culture, teachers also improve students' language skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing by explaining vocabulary, phrases, sentences and chapters and supporting exercises. For example, in the religious culture part of English-speaking countries, teachers will inevitably talk about the Bible, which has great significance and profound influence on the development of English language and culture. Many metaphors are derived from it. For example, the English metaphor "the salt of the earth (social backbone)" originated from the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus encouraged his disciples to use salt as a metaphor: "You are the salt of the earth." While learning this metaphor, students can also learn related words, phrases, etc. In addition, metaphor culture teaching should be carried out in the context of metaphors, which can not only help students learn cultural knowledge visually, but also improve their language skills.

V. CONCLUSION

In short, language, as a kind of thinking and cognitive mechanism, is closely related to culture. Metaphor is rooted in culture and reflects culture, and culture influences the formation and development of metaphor. Therefore, in English culture teaching, teachers should cultivate students' metaphor thinking habits, encourage students to use creative metaphors,

and combine metaphor culture teaching with language teaching.

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