



# A Study of Ideological and Political Education in College English Curriculum Based on Conceptual Metaphor

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**Abstract.** This paper discusses the effective approach of ideological and political education in university English courses from the perspective of conceptual metaphor. By analyzing the metaphorical meaning in the discourse, students develop metaphorical thinking. In this way, students' excellent character can be cultivated in a subtle way, which is effective to realize the fundamental goal of higher education in China, fostering virtues and reinforcing socialist core values.

**Keywords:** conceptual metaphor · college English curriculum · ideological and political education

## 1 Introduction

“Curriculum Ideological and political education” refers to a comprehensive educational concept that combines all kinds of courses with ideological and political education. As a general education course, college English should be actively integrated into the ideological and political teaching system, and play an important role in the implementation of the fundamental task of morality and talent cultivation in universities. How to deeply tap the ideological and political educational resources contained in the teaching material, how to achieve the unity of ideological and political education and the instruction of knowledge, how to enable students to learn and master the laws of things and understand the truth of the world, these questions await solutions from college English teachers. Teachers should explore and practice an effective way to help students enrich knowledge, shape character, and become well-rounded socialist builders and successors.

Conceptual metaphor theory provides a new approach and perspective for English teaching. Scholars at home and abroad have found that conceptual metaphor in reading can help students understand the text and guide their creative thinking [1–4]. This paper discusses the application of conceptual metaphor in university English ideological and political teaching.

## 2 Conceptual Metaphor

Conceptual metaphor is a concept of metaphor proposed by Lakoff & Johnson in the 1980s. They believe that metaphor is not only a feature of language, but also a feature of thought and behavior. In human daily life, metaphor is ubiquitous. The conceptual system on which our thoughts and behaviors are based is itself metaphor-based [5]. Metaphors can be expressed in language precisely because of the existence of metaphors in the conceptual system of man.

Lakoff and Johnson think the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. The working mechanism of metaphor is to map the relatively specific and easy-to-understand source domain to the relatively abstract and difficult-to-understand target domain, so as to better understand the target domain and construct the target domain. Conceptual metaphors fall into three categories: structural metaphors, orientational metaphors and ontological metaphors. Structural metaphor refers to the construction of concepts by metaphor only partially rather than comprehensively. In the projection from the source domain to the target domain, only part of the characteristics of the source domain are projected to the target domain. For example, "We've got a foundation for the argument, now we need a solid framework". In the metaphor that "an argument is a building", only the foundation and framework are mapped from "building" to "argument", not the inner rooms, corridors, roofs, and so on. Orientational metaphor is a metaphor based on spatial orientation, which is based on natural and cultural experience. For example, happy is up, sad is down, like in the following sentences "I am feeling up today.", "He is really low these days.". Ontology metaphor is a metaphorical way of viewing events, activities, emotions, thoughts, etc. as entities and substances, based on human experience of natural things, especially the human body. For example, "My mind just isn't operating today.". Here, the mind is likened to a physical "machine" [5, 6].

## 3 Ideological and Political Education in College English from the Perspective of Conceptual Metaphor

College English, as a general course in almost all universities in China, covers a wide range of learners, hence has the innate advantage of carrying out ideological and political education. However, ideological and political education cannot be rigidly applied, and forcing it not only fails to achieve the purpose of moral education, but will also cause students to get tired and even resist. Therefore, how to achieve the natural combination of moral education and language learning in an implicit way is an important issue. Conceptual metaphor provides a feasible way to solve this problem. Teachers can excavate the metaphorical points that exist in the text, and use metaphors to map abstract ideological and political concepts to concepts or things that students are familiar with, naturally integrating ideological and political education in language teaching.

Vocabulary is the basis of discourse, and the lack of vocabulary cognition is one of the main causes for college students' English reading difficulties. Guiding students to explore the metaphorical meaning of vocabulary in discourse can not only help students expand vocabulary knowledge, but also improve students' discourse analysis ability and

critical thinking ability, and combine language learning and ideological and political education in an implicit way.

Take the text “Toward a bright future for all” as an example (Text A, Unit 1, Book 1 of New Horizon College English Reading and Writing) as an example. This text is a speech delivered by a university president at the freshmen welcome ceremony, which contains some suggestions and expectations for the freshmen. Among them, “war metaphor”, “architectural metaphor” and “journey metaphor” are used.

### 3.1 War Metaphor

Referring to the students’ efforts to get admitted to the university, the president said: “Your achievement is the triumph of years of hard work and of your parents and teachers.” [7]. Here the author uses a “war metaphor”, metaphorically describing the process of learning as a war, and admission to university is the ultimate victory of this war, mapping the source domain “war” to the target domain “learning”. War is won or lost, and there is life and death, so its metaphorical concept is often closely related to the major events that determine the fate of human activities [8]. Using war as a metaphor for learning shows the important role of learning in a person’s life. Learning can affect the direction of human development, and can even completely change the trajectory of a person’s life. In addition, the concept domain of war also includes such sub-concepts as “opponent”, “enemy”, “attack”, “retreat”, “weapons”, and “tactical strategy”. Teachers can guide students to expand the semantic field around the central concept of war in the way of mind mapping, and inspire students to think about who their opponents are in learning? It may be a difficult exercise to solve, or it may be the temptation of entertainment games on mobile phones, or it may be one’s laziness. How should we deal with such “enemies”, to “attack” or to “retreat”? In order to defeat the “enemy”, advanced “weapons” and scientific “combat plans” are essential. Teachers can inspire students to explore scientific learning methods and use advanced learning tools, encourage students to overcome difficulties encountered in learning, strengthen their ideals, so that they can achieve one victory after another in the battle of learning, and finally become a new force in the great cause of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

### 3.2 Architectural Metaphor

Architectural metaphors appear several times in the text. When referring to the future development of college students, the article reads “The future is built on the strong foundation of the past.”, and “We take great pleasure in opening the door to this great step in your journey.” [7]. Referring to the responsibilities of university students, the article reads “You are the inheritors of the hard work of your families and the hard work of many countless others who came before you. They built and transmitted the knowledge you will need to succeed. Now it is your turn”.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue that the construction of metaphorical concepts is partial. In the metaphor “the future is architecture”, the parts of the “building” used to construct the “future” are the “foundation” and “door”, and its roof, interior rooms, and stairs are not used to construct any part of the concept of “future”. The

“foundation” is the lowest part of a building and the key to determining whether a building is strong or not. Through the metaphor of “foundation”, teachers can guide students to think about what is the foundation of future. Students may conclude that knowledge and technical skills learned on campus today are the foundation of the future. Study habits and living habits developed today are the foundation of the future. Friends we make today are the foundation of the future. Today’s experiences are the foundation for the future, and so on. So if we want to build the “building” of the future strong and durable, we must make good use of the precious time in the present, study hard, expand our horizons, and make friends.

The metaphor of “door” reflects the “dividing line between the past and the future”. The teacher opens the door to the future for students, in fact, leading students to bid farewell to the past and walk into the new building of the future, which means opportunity and hope. Hope is also one of the motivations for people to do things. When a person is full of hope, he will be full of motivation, so it will be easier to do things successfully. Teachers here can encourage students to be down-to-earth, lay a solid “foundation”, and be hopeful to enter the “gate” to the future.

When referring to the responsibility of college students, the author uses the expression “build the knowledge”, which is a metaphor that maps the source domain “architecture” to the target domain “knowledge”. Knowledge is also the same as architecture, as there is a structure. Learning knowledge is like building a house. You need to start from the foundation and build bricks and tiles step by step. You can’t build a roof before the walls are finished. Teachers should advise students to build a knowledge system according to correct steps, and never be lazy to take shortcuts, so as to cultivate students’ steadfast and steady style of study.

### 3.3 Journey Metaphor

In the sentences “We take great pleasure in opening the door to this great step in your journey.” [7] and “You are about to participate in the next leg of your journey through life.” [7], journey metaphors are used, mapping the source domain “journey” to the target domain “life”. Life is a journey. In this journey, people will pass through different landscapes, find different fellow travelers on each section of the road, or sometimes they may go alone. They may come to a crossroads, hesitating about the next road. A journey is not always smooth, and sometimes it will inevitably encounter bumps and obstacles. The same is true of life. Young students will inevitably encounter setbacks and challenges in the process of pursuing their ideals and realizing their self-worth. Teachers should give students positive guidance and encourage students to face setbacks in the life journey with a positive attitude. No matter in good times or in bad times, they should not give up the ideal of life and move firmly towards the established direction.

## 4 Conclusion

Cultivating students’ cognitive ability to understand metaphors and extract deep conceptual metaphors from specific metaphorical expressions is a means of language acquisition, which can expand and even create specific, rich and diverse metaphorical language

expressions [9, 10]. From the perspective of ideological and political education, teachers can use metaphorical thinking to guide students to think about the meaning of life, social responsibility and other philosophical issues. College English teachers need to give full play to the ideological and political educational function of university English courses, and truly implement the fundamental task of education, which is “cultivating people with virtue”. In addition, understanding the metaphorical differences between Chinese and Western cultures is conducive to improving the cross-cultural communication ability of contemporary college students, and provide our country with new talents in the 21st century with an international perspective and a Chinese dimension.

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