

A Brief Analysis on the Enlightenment of Metaphor in English Majors' Vocabulary Learning

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to apply conceptual metaphor to English professional vocabulary learning and seek a conceptual metaphor-based vocabulary learning method. In this study, senior English majors in Yuxi Normal University were selected as the research subjects. Questionnaire and interview were used as the main means to investigate their vocabulary learning methods, their metaphorical awareness and metaphorical ability, as well as their desire to learn metaphorical knowledge. The results showed that there were various ways for college students to learn vocabulary, but their metaphorical awareness and metaphorical ability needed to be strengthened. Conceptual metaphor theory played a positive role in vocabulary learning, and could also improve their metaphorical awareness and metaphorical ability. This study also brought some enlightenment to English vocabulary teaching: the application of conceptual metaphor theory in vocabulary learning could effectively improve the efficiency of teaching and learning, and at the same time cultivated students' metaphorical awareness and metaphorical ability.

Keywords:

English Vocabulary Learning, Enlightenment, Metaphorical Awareness, Metaphorical Competence

1. Introduction

This section described the background, the key and difficult point of the study and the research questions.

1.1. Research Background

As one element of a language, vocabulary plays a significant role in language learning. Vocabulary learning has been a headache for many students in English learning. How to improve the present situation of laborious and inefficient vocabulary learning, is unquestionably worth thinking about. Vocabulary, phonology and grammar comprise the three elements of a language, of which vocabulary is the most crucial. Wilkins, as a famous English linguist, once come up with that if there is no

grammar, we can't express many things, but without vocabulary, we can express nothing [10].

A great deal of research has shown the inseparable relationship between vocabulary and language. Most English learners are unable to learn English successfully because their vocabulary is limited. Moreover, most students concentrate more on the literal meaning of spelling, pronunciation and words than to the extended meaning. This one-sided understanding leads to poor understanding in different contexts and cultural backgrounds, which greatly prevents students from expanding their vocabulary. Considering this, this thesis will explore more on English vocabulary learning from the aspect of cognitive linguistics, then reveal how students should use metaphor theory to learn vocabulary, so as to learn English vocabulary more efficiently. Especially, towards students majoring in English, which is more important for them.

On the one hand, English vocabulary has a great deal of words; on the other hand, it has changing meaning with each passing day, which undoubtedly increases the difficulty of vocabulary learning. Metaphor has attracted more notice as an important way of meaning change, and it is also the main origin of creativity in language's daily use. Those researches have indicated that English learners are quickest to grasp the literal meaning of English words that correspond to their mother tongue, but have difficulty with the metaphorical meaning or semantic changes of words. Metaphor is the essential feature of human thinking mode. People often use known cognitive domains to compare and understand new cognitive domains, so as to express new concepts.

The process of metaphor is the process of analogy, cognition and understanding. In the process of metaphor, words acquire new meanings and thus the change of lexical semantics follows. Hence, it is obvious that metaphor plays an important part in lexical semantic change. Therefore, in order to improve the efficiency of vocabulary learning, the way of scientifically applying the research results of cognitive linguistics has become a top priority. The thesis aims to explore the enlightenments of metaphor for students majoring in English on vocabulary learning through the analysis of metaphor.

1.2. Research Questions

Based on vocabulary learning and metaphor theory, the research questions were as follows:

- (1) What enlightenments that metaphor can bring to students majoring in English?
- (2) What useful tips should be provided to teachers and students regarding how to teach or learn English vocabulary more efficiently?

1.3. The Key and Difficult Point of the Research

To collect authentic data and put forward meaningful implications and pedagogical suggestions for students majoring in English from the scientific analysis of outcome of the questionnaire were the key and difficult point of the research.

1.4. The Significance of the Research

Conceptual metaphor mainly includes ontological metaphor, directional metaphor and structural metaphor, which has exerted a great influence on the use of traditional English idioms and polysemous words through its expression mode and cultural

connotation. Therefore, a skillful understanding, application and mastery of conceptual metaphor in English learning can effectively help learners to learn and use English vocabulary more flexibly, especially idioms and polysemous words.

At the same time, language teachers can make use of metaphor theory to further explain the development and changing state of semantics and explain in detail the relationship between the meanings of each word to get better teaching effect.

2. Literature Review

This section reviewed the related researches in three dimensions: studies of conceptual metaphor theory, studies of applying conceptual metaphor theory to vocabulary learning, implications of conceptual metaphor on vocabulary learning.

2.1. Previous Research on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory

The relevant researches of the conceptual metaphor theory were stated here from the following five aspects: main characteristics, working mechanism, the classification of conceptual metaphor, metaphorical awareness, metaphorical competence and vocabulary learning.

2.1.1. The Definition of the Conceptual Metaphor

Lakoff and Johnson brought forward the conceptual metaphor theory in their book named *Metaphor We Live by* which was published in 1980 and then in their another book *The Conceptual Theory of Metaphor* an elaborate explanation was described. According to them, the conceptual metaphor is not the common concept that we usually used for our conventional habit to express the “similar” in concept, but a way to clearly understand and appropriately experience one kind of things in accordance with others [7]. According to it, the metaphor is deeply embedded in our daily life, language, our thinking and action. Therefore, Lakoff and Johnson said that human being’s conceptual system is metaphorical and the way human being think, experience and do, to a certain extent all belong to the metaphor [7]. Accordingly, the nature of metaphor is to clearly express and experience one thing by understanding another thing. Basically, Lakoff said metaphor is conceptual and the metaphorical language is the surface signs of the conceptual metaphor [7], so Lakoff calls it the conceptual metaphor [6].

2.1.2. Main Characteristics of the Conceptual Metaphor

The main characteristics of the conceptual metaphor are pervasiveness, cognitive nature and systematicity. With regard to the conceptual metaphor, metaphor is common in daily life. Many scholars also made many studies to prove this point. Lakoff and Johnson said that the 70% of our language is metaphorical, and by analyzing large amount of daily language they revealed the pervasiveness of metaphor from the other perspective [7]. Moreover, there are many abstract things like argument using the conceptual metaphor to express them in other word in daily life, such as the “argument”, it’s often used by “ARGUMENT IS WAR” to construct it. So metaphor is not a simply language but a way of cognition, the feature of cognition is the nature of metaphor. Finally, although metaphor is pervasive in daily life and language, different metaphors do not randomly exist. Because the conceptual metaphors deal with the transfer of the relationship in a system of a certain field, hence they are structural and systematical.

2.1.3. Working Mechanism of Conceptual Metaphor

Cognitive linguistics holds that a conceptual metaphor contains two parts: the source domain and the target domain [7]. The cognitive ability of conceptual metaphor is to organize schema structure from source domain to target domain. Lakoff said that his mapping appears in the conceptual hierarchy and it is systematic and is restricted by the invariance principle which means the metaphor mapping preserves the source image and its schematic structure by a way of suiting the target domain in side structure [7].

2.1.4. The Classification of Conceptual Metaphor

In the field of conceptual metaphor theory, Lakoff and Johnson divided metaphors into three types according to different fields: spatial metaphor, ontological metaphor and structural metaphor [7]. Lakoff said that spatial metaphor refers to grouping an overall system of interrelated concepts [7]. This metaphor takes spatial orientation as its source domain, such as up-down, deep-shallow, etc. Lakoff pointed out that ontological metaphor refers to treating events, thoughts and activities as entities and substances [7]. For instance, “The mind is an entity.” this metaphor makes the abstract concept “mind” more specific. Lakoff said the third type of conceptual metaphor is structural metaphor, which refers to the metaphorical arrangement of one concept in the context of another [7]. In other words, people can use the structural metaphors to understand relatively abstract or unstructured objects in nature, through a more highly structured topic.

2.1.5. Metaphorical Awareness and Vocabulary Learning

Since cognitive metaphor has begun to develop, the universality of metaphor has been well known. Therefore, it is necessary to learn the metaphorical language in the language learning process. Boers in his book *Metaphor Awareness and Vocabulary Retention* gave clear explanation of metaphorical awareness which include [1]:

- (1) To recognize that metaphor is a common component of everyday language;
- (2) The understanding of the metaphorical themes behind many figurative expressions;
- (3) To acknowledge the non-arbitrariness of many metaphors;
- (4) The understanding of the possible cross-cultural differences of metaphorical themes;
- (5) Recognition of cross-language differences in metaphors.

Boers also reported by enhancing the learners’ metaphorical awareness can facilitate their retention of language [1], therefore, it will help their language learning.

2.1.6. Metaphorical Competence and Vocabulary Learning

Metaphorical competence is the capacity of understanding or experience one thing based on another. Gardner and Winner said in *The Development of Metaphorical Competence: The implications for Humanistic Disciplines* put forward the concept of metaphorical competence [4]. Relating to metaphorical competence on children, a great many researches were carried out. They concluded that metaphorical competence plays an important role in language acquisition. In their view, metaphorical abilities include: The ability to interpret a metaphor, to paraphrase the

rationale for the effectiveness of a metaphor, to create a metaphor proper to a given context, and to estimate the appropriateness of some competing metaphorical expressions [4].

Later, Littlemore also gave his opinion on metaphorical competence components which contain three capacities: the capacity for using and creating metaphors, the capacity for using learning strategies [8]. Danesi researched about the metaphorical competence of language, and his results showed that their conceptual fluency and metaphorical competence deficiency are the two reasons that lead to lots of foreign language learner's learning less than satisfactory and poor in language production [3]. Specifically, there are several factors that affect metaphorical ability, and vocabulary acquisition is also one of them. It can be seen that metaphorical ability is closely related to vocabulary learning.

2.2. Studies of Applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory to Vocabulary Learning at Home

The empirical and theoretical studies of employing the conceptual metaphor theory to vocabulary learning will be considered in retrospect shortly in this part. Then some related conclusion will be drawn, and some enlightenments of employing conceptual metaphor theory to vocabulary learning also will be described.

2.2.1. Studies of Applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory to Vocabulary Learning Abroad

In 1990, Cameron and Low in *Researching and Applying Metaphor* stated that metaphor can be used in different contexts, such as the course of foreign language used by children, and the course of learning and teaching a foreign language [2]. This book was developed from the angle of applied linguistics. Then since cognitive linguistics has developed, more linguists changed their research angle of metaphor, they regarded metaphor as a method of thinking. Lakoff and Johnson have published the famous book *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980, which proved that the conceptual metaphor theory was presented officially, more linguists have begun to investigate the relation between vocabulary learning and metaphor theory. Word is often more metaphorical than denotative meaning and that the metaphorical meaning is more frequent in usage. Low pointed out that the derivative metaphors of many polygamous words appear more frequently [9]. In his article *On Metaphor Teaching*, he emphasized the important role of metaphor in language learning and teaching, and advocated that students should develop metaphorical ability and cultivate metaphorical awareness. In regard to metaphorical aspects, idioms learning play a significant role in language learning. Hence, numerous linguists put their efforts into this field. In fact, idioms themselves are special metaphor which were called "dead metaphors", while in modern theories, the idioms are regarded as the "living metaphors". Gibbs and O'Brien found that the participants are helpful to form constantly image for idioms which have similar meanings in conceptual metaphor [5].

The Western researches offered more implications to vocabulary acquisition. The studies of this field have been reached a peak, but the study of employing the conceptual metaphor theory to vocabulary learning was limited.

2.2.2. Studies of Applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory to Vocabulary Learning in China

Chinese linguists viewed metaphor as a rhetoric device for a long time, so relative studies about metaphor began a little late in China. Then some linguists began to realize cognitive function of metaphor and they began to apply the western conceptual metaphor theory into China. Hu Zhuanglin [17] and Dong Hongle [15] talked about the metaphor plays important role in the vocabulary evolution and transformation from the cognitive perspective. Liu Jin said that metaphorical mechanism played an important theoretical foundation in associative vocabulary teaching [18]. Liang Xiaobo believed that metaphor is a significant role in cognitive linguistics and he further analyzed the characteristics based on the acquisition of second foreign language and pointed out the positive effect metaphor competence has in improving the expandable and semantic logic ability for second foreign language learners [20]. Wu Li gave a classification of the conceptual metaphor which is quite helpful in understanding the idioms and phrases [21].

Based on the predecessors' researches, the present paper tries to apply the conceptual theory into English vocabulary learning through explaining the metaphorical meaning. The purpose of this study is to acquire vocabulary more effectively and to cultivate students' metaphorical ability and metaphorical awareness.

2.3. Implications of Conceptual Metaphor on Vocabulary Learning

Conceptual metaphor theory can help learners facilitate to learn the polysemous words, prepositions and verb phrases.

2.3.1. Implications of Conceptual Metaphor on Polysemous Words

Languages change all the time, unchanged language actually does not exist, each part of a language can change. The language change can be embodied by vocabulary, such as varnishing of old words and emergence of new words, the changeable meaning of existing words. The phenomenon of polysemy is the inescapable stage of word meaning development. With the help of specific things, people are easier to understand the abstract things, conceptual metaphor theory can explain the process of linguistic meaning change and the relationship of words. Taking "heart" as an example, its original meaning is "an important part of the body," so in a basic sense it can mean "something important or desirable," so we can see the expression "the city is the heart of this country". In fact, the conceptual metaphor "heart is important" occurs in these expressions. In summary, conceptual metaphor theory offers a new way of cross-domain to learners to memorize and comprehend polysemy.

2.3.2. Implications of Conceptual Metaphor on Prepositions and Verb Phrases

Prepositions are quite important vocabulary learning which is a headache for Chinese learners. They are more likely to understand and remember prepositions if they know that numerous prepositions are polysemies that originated from the conceptual metaphors. For instance, the preposition "at" can extend from the object space location to the time (at the 9'o'clock), the state (at study), the location (at the classroom), field (good at speaking), pattern (at top voice), state (at these phrases) and reason (be angry at), etc. (see the figure of extending meaning of at) that form the radical network of the "at" meanings [14]. Therefore, the concepts that used to express the mental space are not arbitrary, but rational system. (See the Figure 1)

English verbs mainly have two forms: verb with a preposition or a verb. The two forms both involve conceptualization. The former can be understood through the

conceptual metaphor of prepositions mentioned above. Take the most common verb phrases “up” and “down” as an example, in accordance with the conceptual metaphor theory, the metaphor “up” and “down” belongs to the orientation metaphors that means there are mappings from concrete spatial concepts to abstract concepts or domains [12]. The original meaning of “up” means “a higher position”. Due to the conceptual metaphors “HAPPY IS UP” and “SAD IS DOWN”, consequently the phrasal verb “cheer up” is easy to understand, when he or she is happy, he or she has a high spirit. Therefore, there are some similarities between these two domains. They both have the same experience. According to another metaphor “SAD IS DOWN”, the expressions like “let somebody down” are easy to understand. In short, although prepositions and verb phrases are difficult in vocabulary learning, they still can be comprehended with conceptual metaphor theory.

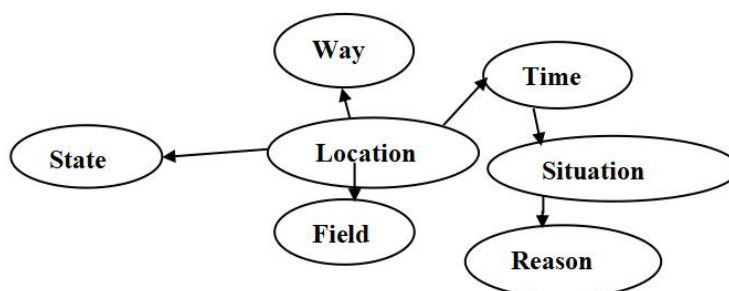


Figure 1. The Extending Meanings of Preposition “at” (By Chen Wanhui, 2008).

3. Research Methodology

The purpose of this section is to provide a clear understanding of methodology and relative study methods for readers in the study. The research aims are to apply metaphor theory in English vocabulary learning for English majors. It is vital to obtain effective data and information to build an accurate image of the study. To a large extent, methodology determines the outcomes of research. Accordingly, it is crucial to choose the appropriate research methods and to conduct research in order to answer the research question and achieve the research objective. Hence, this part introduced subjects and research instruments.

3.1. Subjects

The objects of this study are seniors majoring in English in Yuxi Normal University. There are three classes of seniors majoring in English in total and their average age is around 22. Additionally, most of the students’ comprehensive English ability is still average, most of them still do not have the full metaphor awareness when they learn or memorize English vocabulary. They just learn English vocabulary by rote learning and do not understand the extended meaning of the vocabulary they learn in terms of metaphor theory.

3.2. Research Instruments

As for research instruments, literature review method, questionnaire survey (see Appendix 1) and interview (see Appendix 2) were applied.

3.2.1. Literature Review Method

There have been many researches on vocabulary learning, from which the author can get inspiration. For example:

(1) Ling Huiqing points out metaphor is the source of creating words and innovating the meaning of words, but how metaphor makes words produce new meanings has been the focus of research all the time [19].

(2) According to Guo Lei, it was claimed that vocabulary is the basic building block of a language and the cornerstone of more complex structure. Metaphors widely exist in everyday language and become a basic cognitive mechanism [21].

(3) Chen Xiaoxin discussed that metaphor, which is an important way of changing the meaning of words in language and the main source of creativity in daily language use, has attracted more and more people's attention [13].

(4) Lakoff and Johnson believed that metaphor is omnipresent in daily life, not only in language, but also in thinking and behavior. The everyday conceptual system by which we think and act is also metaphorical in nature [7].

(5) Chen Jing analyzed that one of the products of human cognition is language, and metaphor is a tool of human cognition [11]. Accordingly, it is helpful and necessary to study the effect of metaphor on language learning, especially foreign language learning, from a cognitive perspective. Metaphor and language learning, especially vocabulary learning, are closely related. Conceptual metaphor theory provides a theoretical basis for the interaction between them.

3.2.2. Questionnaire

Questionnaire survey is the proof of further collecting real data on the basis of observation method. Through questionnaire survey method, we can further demonstrate the question to be studied according to metaphor theory in a real and effective way and finally draw a conclusion. For example, whether students are able to memorize the meaning of “cheer up” according to the original meaning of “up” through conceptualization metaphor.

Firstly, the questionnaires, each consists of 13 questions, were given to subjects, then they were asked to answer each question combining their own situation. They were encouraged to complete the questionnaire honestly. Before answering the questions, the definition of “metaphor” was given and ensured that every subject knew it well, which helped improve the reliability and validity of the questionnaire.

Questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was adopted here to investigate the methods that English majors often adopt when they memorize English vocabulary, also learnt about their metaphor awareness and metaphor competence and their attitude towards the relationship between English grades and vocabulary learning. The questionnaires, each with 13 questions were completed in two weeks by 117 students on the Internet, then they were asked to respond honestly according to their own ideas about English vocabulary and metaphor. In order to let participants understand clearly, all the questions were translated into Chinese.

3.2.3. Interview

In order to conduct the interview, the author interviewed four college students majoring in English in Yuxi Normal University. Meanwhile, for the credibility of the research, four English students selected were all experienced with a great deal of learning years. For example, “What are the opinions of these students on English vocabulary teaching in terms of metaphor theory? What methods do they use when

they learn English vocabulary, and what advantages and disadvantages of these methods have comparing with metaphor theory?”

Interview (Appendix 2) was designed to further learn about the real situation English majors are in now. Because the condition is limited, the author could not interview the interviewees face to face but by the voice call in WeChat. The conversations were recorded by the sound recorder. There were four questions in every interview, the four interviewees were asked to answer the questions with their real ideas and give their real answers.

4. Finding and Discussion

The purpose of this section was to offer readers findings according to the questionnaire and interview. Meanwhile, the discussions between the study and the relative researches were also stated.

4.1. The Finding from the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to investigate the students’ metaphorical awareness. Combining the data from the questionnaire, the finding was stated from six aspects: the way that English majors use to memorize vocabulary, the attitudes towards the relationship between vocabulary memorizing and English learning efficiency, the attention towards metaphor, the implications that metaphor would bring, the wish to learn the knowledge of metaphor and different ways of translation.

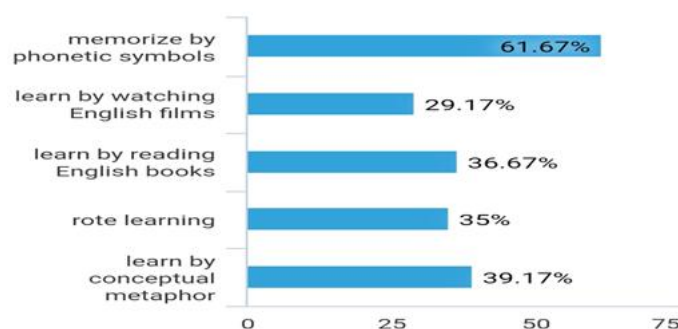


Figure 2. *The Way that English Majors Use to Memorize Vocabulary.*

On the basis of Figure 2, it was found that 61.67% of the students memorized vocabulary by phonetic symbols. Besides, 29.17% of the students learnt vocabulary by watching English films. And 36.67% of the students read English books to accumulate vocabulary. What’s more, the students who learnt vocabulary by rote learning accounted for 35%. Furthermore, 39.17% of the students learn vocabulary by conceptual metaphor.

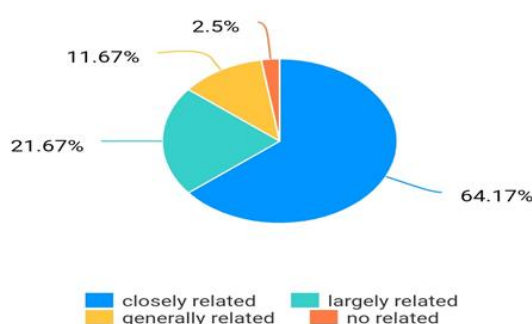


Figure 3. *The Attitudes towards the Relationship between Vocabulary Memorizing and English Learning Efficiency.*

By analyzing the data of Figure 3 above, it can be seen that 64.17% of the students deemed that vocabulary memorizing was closely related with English learning efficiency. Furthermore, 21.67% of the students considered that vocabulary memorizing was largely related with English learning efficiency. Besides, the students who deemed that there was a general relation between vocabulary memorizing and English learning efficiency. Only 2.5% of the students thought that there was no relation between vocabulary learning and English learning efficiency.

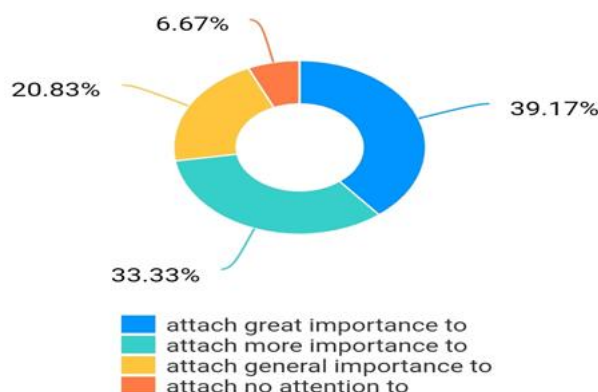


Figure 4. *The Attention towards Metaphor.*

Figure 4 above implied that 39.17% of students attached great importance to metaphor. In addition, 33.33% of the students attached more importance to metaphor. Furthermore, the students who attached general importance to metaphor accounted for 20.83%. Only 6.67% of the students paid no attention to the phenomenon---metaphor.

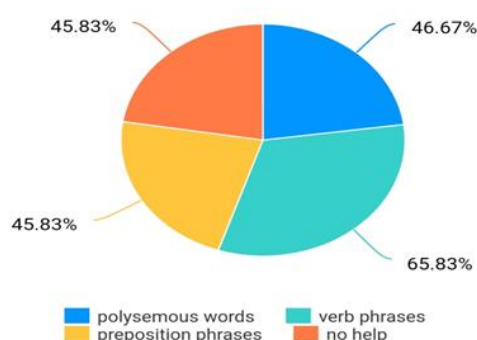


Figure 5. *The Implications that Metaphor would Bring.*

According to the data of Figure 5 above, it was found that 65.83% of the students deemed that metaphor benefited their learning of verb phrases. Besides, 46.67% of the students considered that metaphor brought implications for the learning of polysemous words. And the students who thought that metaphor brought implications for preposition phrases accounted for 45.83%. But also 45.83% of the students thought that metaphor was no help.

Figure 6 indicated that 46.67% of the students especially intended to learn the relative knowledge of metaphor. They really had strong wish to improve their metaphorical competence. What's more, 35% of the students really proposed to learn the relevant knowledge of metaphor. Those students that generally intended to learn the knowledge of metaphor accounted for 12.5%. From the data, it was truly obvious that only 5.83% of the students had no wish to learn about the pertinent knowledge of metaphor.

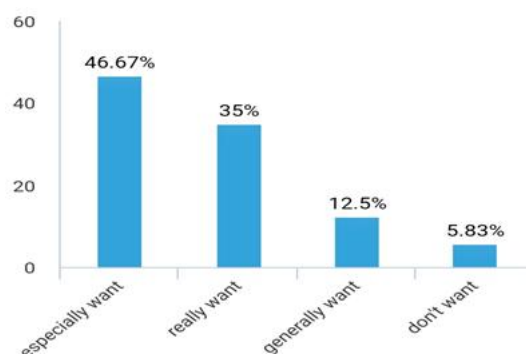


Figure 6. *The Wish to Learn the Knowledge of Metaphor.*

On the learning of idioms, the acquisition of verb phrases and preposition phrases, it can be clearly seen that 47.5% of the students literally translated those phrases they met. It turned out that they had weak metaphorical awareness. They needed to further learn the knowledge of conceptual metaphor to improve their conceptual metaphor competence. Besides, 28.33% of the students adopted free translation. Only 24.17% of the students translated those phrases appropriately.

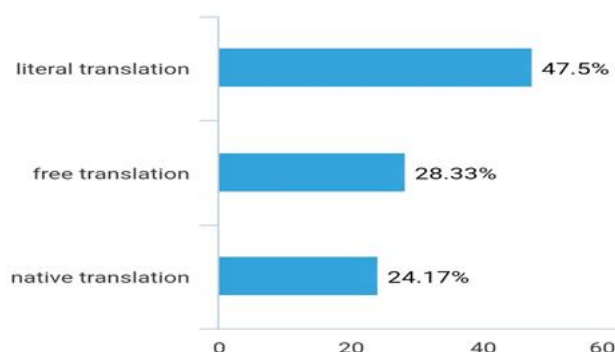


Figure 7. *The Different Ways of Translation.*

It was also found that there were two findings. The first was that students were quite familiar with Chinese idioms, which benefited their English vocabulary learning, especially idiom learning when they met similar phrases in English. The other finding was that the students were learning other phrases like verb phrases, most of them were able to infer one extended meaning, but it was especially difficult for them to further infer more appropriate meanings according to different situation because they lack the knowledge of conceptual metaphor to some extent. It turned out that they intended to learn the knowledge of conceptual metaphor more deeply to improve their conceptual metaphor competence.

4.2. The Finding from the Interview

The finding was described from four dimensions: the ways memorizing vocabulary, the views towards metaphor, the using frequency and the advantages of metaphor.

By analyzing the recording materials, firstly, it was found that English majors often memorize English vocabulary by reading English articles or novels, doing exercises, reciting vocabulary in vocabulary books, listening to English songs, watching English TV series or English films, skimming through the articles sent by the WeChat Public Account.

What's more, it was found that most students knew the definition of metaphor, they deemed that metaphor is to understand abstract things with concrete things. The

interviewees had learned linguistics, so most of them are familiar with the definition. Only a minor part of students had forgotten the concept of metaphor. Especially for the students who had prepared postgraduate entrance exam, they put more effort on learning linguistics, so they were quite familiar with metaphor.

In addition, it was found that most students seldom used metaphor to memorize vocabulary in their daily life. They said it was because they choose to recite words directly facing so many tests. Some of them said that they sometimes used metaphor to learn vocabulary when they learnt some phrases like “love me, love my dog”, “apple of the eye” etc. Nearly 25% of students did not use metaphor to learn vocabulary.

Finally, through analyzing the answers, it was actually found that all of them considered that metaphor was beneficial to vocabulary learning. They deemed that metaphor made vocabulary learning more vivid and interesting, which boosted their interest to learn more vocabulary. Some of them also said that metaphor makes their memorization more lasting. And then, some of them also said that metaphor was beneficial to their translation and made their translation more native.

4.3. Discussion and Major Findings

By analyzing the questionnaire and the interview, findings had been drawn. They were as follows:

(1) The seniors majoring in English often used phonetic symbols to memorize vocabulary. Besides, they also use other ways to learn vocabulary like by reading English articles or novels, doing exercises, reciting vocabulary in actual books, listening to English songs, watching English TV series or films, skimming through the articles sent by the WeChat Public Account.

(2) Most students have metaphorical awareness and they pay attention to this language phenomenon in their daily life, only a minor part of students did not pay attention to it. Especially, for the students who have prepared postgraduate entrance exam, they put more effort on learning linguistics, so they have more metaphorical competence.

(3) The seniors whose major is English have a positive attitude towards metaphor, most of them were able to say out the definition of metaphor and some relative examples. For those students who have attended postgraduate entrance examination and whose major is linguistics, they are quite familiar with metaphor, they also use metaphor to help them to understand abstract concepts and accumulate more vocabulary, especially the acquiring of the verbs, polysemous words and prepositions. Wuli once said the classification of conceptual metaphor benefited to idioms and phrases [22]. This idea was consistent with the finding above. It was proved that the research was convincing to some extent.

(4) Conceptual metaphor theory helps enhance students' metaphorical awareness and metaphorical competence. Cui Lexu pointed out there were mappings from concrete spatial concepts to abstract concepts [12]. Actually, it was proved that the mappings could help improve metaphorical awareness and metaphorical competence. The view was consistent with the finding which was stated above.

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this section was to offer readers the implications that metaphor could bring. And the deficiencies of the research and recommendations for future research were given here.

5.1. *The Enlightenments for English Learning and Teaching*

Through combining the data and analysis of the research, the following implications were given to help improve the efficiency of teaching and learning for teachers and students.

5.1.1. *For Students*

Firstly, the students were recommended to choose what kind of words that is truly necessary and especially significant for Chinese students and they should put more effort on the basic level words. The reasons were stated as below, according to psychological analysis, people always remember easy things at the beginning and then move to more difficult things. And according to cognitive metaphorical metaphor theory, many metaphorical meanings developed from the basic meaning of the words.

Secondly, more effort was encouraged on culture learning, because culture plays a significant role in language learning, and students should try to choose the typical vocabulary with metaphorical meanings, and then to learn them combining their cultural background.

Thirdly, the two important factors that decide the metaphorical level are metaphorical awareness and metaphorical competence. Therefore, it is advisable to pay more attention to improve their metaphorical awareness and metaphorical competence, they should also expand their reading scope.

5.1.2. *For Teachers*

Firstly, the learning of conceptual metaphor theory makes English teachers pay more attention to the cognition function, and start to use it to facilitate English language teaching.

Secondly, conceptual metaphor theory offers English teachers a complementary approach of teaching vocabulary, especially, the teaching of verbal phrases, polysemous words, prepositions, idioms and proverbs. Therefore, it might be easier for students to find the internal relation of polysemous words and memorize the different meanings of the same word for a longer time.

Thirdly, the metaphorical awareness and metaphorical competence were beneficial to communicative competence, so the students would be encouraged to use more figurative language and metaphorical thinking. The teachers should pay more attention to improve the metaphorical competence of the students.

5.2. *Deficiencies and Recommendations*

Owing to the limited condition and other uncontrolled factors, it was found that deficiencies of the research existed. In addition, based on the previous researches, related recommendations for future research were also provided below.

5.2.1. *Deficiencies of the Research*

Foremost, the subjects in the study were selected from the seniors whose major is English at the Department of Yuxi Normal University in Yuxi, thus it might not represent the whole situation in China. In fact, if possible, the subjects should be selected more and more randomly. It is also surely necessary to investigate different students of different levels from different colleges in different areas in China.

In addition, the metaphor is a tool of cognition and belongs to a language phenomenon, so culture is a necessary factor that must be combined. The attention to culture aspect was not given too much attention in this research. In a word, if these factors mentioned above can be emphasized, the research can be more convincing.

5.2.2. Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the previous researches, some recommendations for future research are provided below.

Firstly, in the present research, the subjects were selected from seniors whose major is English, consequently the subjects can be selected from freshman, sophomore, junior of English major or non-English majors, to check whether metaphor can be beneficial to their vocabulary learning, writing, listening or other aspects.

Secondly, it is suggestive to investigate whether and to what degree learners' motivation and gender differences influence the metaphorical competence of learning vocabulary in a scientific way.

Thirdly, more conceptual metaphor corpus of different levels and different majors of foreign language learning students should be built, which may influence the systematic research of conceptual metaphor and its application to language teaching and learning.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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Appendix 1

Guidance: Welcome to participate in this survey, please read each question carefully, and fill your answer in the corresponding position on the answer sheet, there is no right and wrong answer, each question can only be chosen one answer, please answer according to your actual situation, thank you for your cooperation!

1. Are you an English major?

☐ yes

☐ no

2. Your grade is:

☐ freshman year

☐ sophomore year

- ☐ junior year
 - ☐ senior
3. What is your gender:
- ☐ male
 - ☐ female
4. Do you think the effect of English learning has a lot to do with the degree of word memorization?
- ☐ tightly related
 - ☐ much related
 - ☐ normally related
 - ☐ little related
5. Which of the following uses metaphor? [Multiple choice]
- ☐ Life is a journey.
 - ☐ He is a pig.
 - ☐ How high it is today!
 - ☐ She is as beautiful as a flower.
 - ☐ Missing is a kind of disease.
6. Do you pay attention to metaphor in your daily study?
- ☐ pay great attention to
 - ☐ pay much attention to
 - ☐ pay attention to
 - ☐ pay little attention to
7. How do you translate "head of stairs" when you know the meaning of "head"?
- ☐ stair head
 - ☐ important location of stairs
 - ☐ top of the stairs
8. How would you translate "head of government" when you know both the meaning of "head" and the meaning of "important"?
- ☐ head of the government
 - ☐ important government figures
 - ☐ heads of government
9. When you know the meaning of "up" and also the meaning of "cheer up", what do you infer?
- ☐ can't push anything out
 - ☐ up is happy.
 - ☐ in addition to "up is happy," it will also release "down is sad."

10. How do you translate when you learn to teach fish to swim?

Teach fish to swim

- ☐ can't translate at all
- ☐ teach a fish how to swim

11. What do you think are the implications of metaphor for word learning?
[Multiple choice]

- ☐ polysemy
- ☐ phrasal verbs
- ☐ prepositional phrases
- ☐ no help

12. What are the ways you usually memorize words? [Multiple choice]

- ☐ phonetic memory
- ☐ learn from American TV dramas -
- ☐ read English books
- ☐ rote learning
- ☐ by metaphors

13. Do you want to learn about metaphor and improve your metaphorical skills?

- ☐ greatly want
- ☐ want
- ☐ normally want
- ☐ not really want

Appendix 2

1. What are your usual ways to learn English vocabulary?

2. Do you know metaphors? Can you briefly explain your understanding?

3. Have you ever used metaphors in memorizing words? Can you give me an example?

4. In terms of your learning experience, do you think metaphors are beneficial to your vocabulary learning? What do you think are the benefits?

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