

LINGUISTICS | 当代语言学研究文库 |

魏耀章◎著

An Investigation into the Roles of Cognitive
Ability and Language Proficiency in Chinese
EFL Learners' Metaphor Comprehension
and Production

认知能力和语言水平 对中国英语学习者隐喻 理解和生成的影响



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藏书



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内 容 提 要

本书首先从隐喻研究以来最具影响的以 Aristotle 为代表的古典隐喻理论和以 Lakoff & Johnson 为代表的当代隐喻理论 (Steen 2000: 261) 入手, 借助于其他相关研究成果, 探究隐喻的本质属性。在此基础上, 作者指出, 两种理论的根本分歧不在于它们所讨论的隐喻本质有所不同, 而是由于它们各自受当时所处的社会历史和学术环境的影响和制约, 从不同的角度阐释了对隐喻的理解。

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前 言

自 Aristotle 伊始,隐喻研究跨越了两千多年的历史长河,期间理论流派竞现,各有其说,仁智互见。由于外语教学研究界总是热衷于从理论语言学研究获取养料(White 2003: 147),因此这些隐喻理论无疑对外语教学研究的走向起着举足轻重的影响。有鉴于此,本书认为,当前对于外语教学研究和教学而言,要提高外语学习者的隐喻能力,首当其冲的问题是要对各种隐喻理论进行深入的分析,进而探究影响外语学习者隐喻能力发展的各种关键因素。

据此,本书首先从隐喻研究以来最具影响的以 Aristotle 为代表的古典隐喻理论和以 Lakoff & Johnson 为代表的当代隐喻理论(Steen 2000: 261)入手,借助于其他相关研究成果,探究隐喻的本质属性。在此基础上,作者指出,两种理论的根本分歧不在于它们所讨论的隐喻本质有所不同,而是由于它们各自受当时所处的社会历史和学术环境的影响和制约,从不同的角度阐释了对隐喻的理解。换句话说,Aristotle 的隐喻理论正如 Kittay (1989)和 Mahon (2001)所说还是以认知为基础的,只是它更注重研究隐喻的修辞功能,而 Lakoff & Johnson 更关注隐喻作为人类认识世界之工具的认知功能。因此,隐喻能力从本质上来说是认知的问题。另外,依据 Richards (1965)的观点,隐喻能力并非像 Aristotle 所言是天才的标志;相反,人类普遍具有这种能力,所不同的只是“度”的问题,也就是说只是隐喻能力强与弱的问题。其次,本文认为,由于隐喻从本质上说具有认知的特点,一般来讲,由于本族语学习者的语言水平已经相对完善,因而对他们来说,语言交际过程中隐喻的理解和产出可能更多取决于认知水平。然而,对外语学习者而言,因其语言水平相对薄弱,其隐喻理解和生成能力除了受认知能力的影响外,语言水平也可能是一个不可忽略的制约因素。当然,本书也并不否认其他诸如学习风格、动机、文化背景等因素对隐喻理解和生成能力的影响。作者

进而指出,由于外语学习者的认知能力和语言水平不同,其隐喻理解和生成能力也就不同。另外,一般而言,理解和生成是两个不同的认知过程,因此,认知能力和语言水平对二者的影响也可能呈现不同的情况。为了进一步探究以上问题,本研究从应用语言学的角度,以82名中国大学英语专业学生为被试对象进行了一项实证研究,得出以下主要结论。

1)中国英语学习者的隐喻理解能力既是一个认知能力的问题,又是一个语言水平的问题。研究发现,学习者的认知能力和语言水平与其隐喻理解能力高度相关;认知能力可以解释43.6%隐喻理解能力的变异,语言水平可以预测43.9%的相关变异。换句话说,认知能力和语言水平都是决定隐喻理解的显著变量。就隐喻生成而言,比较来看,认知能力对隐喻生成能力变异的解释力为83.5%,而语言水平仅能解释其10.8%的变异,但是却和其有非常明显正相关关系。可以看出,认知能力对隐喻生成能力的预测力明显强于语言水平。这一结果说明,隐喻理解和生成是两个不同的认知过程,因此,学习者的认知能力和语言水平在隐喻理解和生成过程中扮演着不同的角色。由此推理,对外语学习者来讲,隐喻理解既是一个认知能力的问题,也是一个语言水平的问题。而隐喻生成主要还是一个认知能力的问题,但是语言水平和其高度相关。

2)认知能力和语言水平在不同认知能力和语言水平的学习者隐喻理解过程中表现出不同的作用。具体而言,当学习者处于低水平认知阶段时,其认知能力对隐喻理解的解释力不明显,只达到27.1%,而语言水平的解释力却非常明显,达到了48.3%。当学习者处于高水平认知阶段时,认知能力和语言水平对隐喻理解的作用正好和其处于低水平阶段时相反。换言之,在学习者认知能力较高时,其认知能力对隐喻理解能力的预测力非常明显,达到了44.4%,而这个时候语言水平的预测力并不明显,只有6%。这说明,学习者的认知能力越强,其认知能力对隐喻理解的贡献越大,随之,其语言水平的贡献越小。但是实验发现,当学习者无论是处于哪个(高、低)认知水平时,其认知能力对隐喻生成的解释力都非常明显,而语言水平的解释力都不明显。这说明,隐喻生成主要还是一个认知能力的问题。

当学习者处于低水平语言阶段时,其认知能力和语言水平对隐喻理解的解释能力都非常明显。实验发现,在这一阶段,认知能力可以解释 54% 隐喻理解能力的变异,语言水平能解释 34.4% 的相关变异。当学习者处于高水平语言阶段时,认知能力对隐喻理解能力的解释力很明显,达到了 37.8%;而语言水平的解释力并不十分明显,只有 28.9%。这表明,语言水平越高的学习者更多的是借助他们的认知能力来理解隐喻,而语言水平低的学习者同时依靠其认知能力和语言水平来达到他们理解隐喻的目的。实验发现,对语言水平不同的学生来讲,其隐喻生成能力的高低主要还是取决于他们认知能力的高低,语言水平的作用不明显。这表明,隐喻生成不同于理解,主要是认知能力的问题。

3) 实验发现,在理解四种不同的隐喻句子时,学习者的认知能力除了对第一种句子理解的预测力不明显外(20.7%),对其他三种句子的预测力都比较或非常明显(分别为 22.9%, 43%, 42.3%)。而语言水平对所有类型的隐喻句子理解的预测力都非常明显(依次为 42.7%, 41.2%, 28.4%, 29.4%)。具体来讲,当目的语和母语的概念和语词都对等时,认知能力对其隐喻理解能力的解释力不明显,而在其他三种情况下,即,当两种语言在概念和语词方面呈现出各种不同的差异时,认知能力能显著地解释学习者隐喻理解能力的变异。对于隐喻生成而言,学习者的认知能力对构成生成能力的三个变量:隐喻的数量、恰当性、新颖性的预测能力都极其明显,依次达到 75.5%, 84.3%, 76.8%, 而语言水平的预测力都不明显。

本书最后讨论了本研究对于同类研究和外语教学和学习的启示意义,指出了其局限性以及今后同类研究的方向。

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2015 年 3 月 10 日

List of Abbreviations

ARIT	Advanced raven intelligence test
APT	The degree of aptness of metaphors produced in the topic writing
CFTMS	Comprehension of the four different types of metaphorical sentences
CG	Cognition group
COG	Cognition
CTP	Creative thinking practice
EFL	English as a foreign language
ESP	English for specific purposes
FLTL	Foreign language teaching and learning
HCG	High cognition group
HPG	High proficiency group
HLG	High language proficiency group
ICG	Intermediate cognition group
ILG	Intermediate language proficiency group
LCG	Low cognition group
LG	Language proficiency group
LLG	Low language proficiency group
LP	Language proficiency
LPG	Low proficiency group
MAQ	Meta-cognitive ability
METACOG	Metacognition
MC	Metaphor comprehension
MN	The number of metaphors in the composition
MP	Metaphor production

NOV	The degree of novelty of metaphors produced in the topic writing
PDAN	Production of density, aptness and novelty
PER	Percentage
RLC	Recognition of linguistic cues
SRC	Sentence reading comprehension
SSF	Sentence stem filling
TEM 4	Test for English Majors Grade Four
TSA	The total score of aptness
TSV	Total score of vocabulary
TW	Topic writing
UDTM	Understanding of different types of metaphor

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Chapter 1 General Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The study of metaphor has undergone quite a long history of over 2,400 years, during which a number of competing, if not all, conflicting theories about it have been advanced. The earliest research into metaphor can be traced back to about 300 B.C. Ever since then, we have witnessed a period when constant arguments about and unremitting efforts at metaphor have attracted the attention from a constellation of sciences, ranging from philosophy, anthropology, psychology, sociology, linguistics, neurology as well as pedagogy (Martinich 1990; Richards 1965; Searl 1978; Sperber & Wilson 2001; Gibbs & Steen 1997; Ortony 1998; Fitzgerald 1993; Hu 2002; Cameron & Low 2001; Low 1988; Goatly 2000; Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Littlemore 2001; Paul 1998; Boers 2000a, 2000b; Bailey 2003; Moser 2000; Guerrero & Villamil 2000; Rohrer 1995; Kimmel 2004). This boundless enthusiasm for metaphor reached its climax in 1970s, and thereby resulted in what Mark Johnson called a metaphormania in the academic circles (Yu 1998: 2; Chen 2003: 361) and became a topic of the utmost importance in cognitive science in 1990s. This was the situation in the western world. However, comparatively speaking, this phenomenon of the prosperity of and zeal for metaphor study in the outside world appeared to go, to some extent, if not at all, unnoticed in China (Shu 2003: 1) before 1990s. Thereafter, things seemed to turn out to be different. In the past fifteen years, papers on metaphor have been published in

large volumes (Shu *et al* 2004). Nevertheless, a careful reading of these publications reveals that a big proportion of them is mostly focused on the ontological and psychological aspects of metaphor and a small, if not all, percentage are targeted on metaphor in language teaching and learning. This is especially true of the situation in foreign language teaching and learning (FLTL) not only in Chinese context, but also in the western world (Lindstomberg 1997; Low 1988; Bailey 2003: 5-6; Johnson 1999; Pang & Ding 2002: 9; Jiang & Zhang 2003; Cai 2005). Cameron & Low (1999: 77) makes it even clearer, "The study of metaphor has exploded in the last decades, but little of the impact of that explosion has so far reached applied linguistics." Although Cameron & Low are somewhat exaggerating, at least the problem has not received rapt attention of many of the FLTL researchers and practitioners.

And it is from these bare facts that the present research takes its initial inspiration.

1.2 Need for the study

As is stated in the above section, relatively little empirical research into metaphor has been conducted from the perspective of foreign language teaching and learning. However, with the rise and spread of cognitive linguistics, recently some researchers come to realize the importance of metaphor in language learning. In a sense, the realization of the importance mainly derives from some researchers' awareness of the pervasiveness of metaphor in everyday language. For example, it is found that about six metaphors turn up every minute in ordinary conversations (Kellerman 1998: 1) and most English speakers utter about 10 million novel metaphors per lifetime (Cooper 1999: 233).