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Advanced Chinese EFL Learners' Development of Metaphorical Competence: A COM Hypothesis-based Account

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——隐喻生涯假说阐释

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前　言

随着隐喻学理论研究的深入，其研究成果不断被应用到二语习得和外语教学中，以解释二语习得中出现的问题。尽管国外学者很早就倡议将隐喻能力纳入外语教学的目标之一，然而关于隐喻能力的研究依旧匮乏，跟踪二语学习者隐喻能力发展的实证研究更是乏善可陈。其中一个重要原因是迄今为止，尚未有一个现成的关于隐喻能力发展的理论，因此我们无从描述、更无法解释二语学习者隐喻能力发展的路径和规律。

本书试图借助隐喻生涯假说对中国高级英语学习者隐喻能力的发展进行描述和阐释。研究以英语新鲜名词隐喻为出发点，着重探讨高级阶段英语学习者对该类隐喻的习得，从而窥视其隐喻能力的发展路径。全书共 6 章：第 1 章交代研究背景及相关重要概念；第 2 章介绍隐喻能力研究的现状和存在问题；第 3 章探讨隐喻能力发展研究框架的构建思路，在介绍当前隐喻加工几个重要理论的基础上引入隐喻生涯假说作为考察二语学习者隐喻能力发展的理论框架；第 4 章在隐喻生涯假说的框架内对隐喻能力进行重新界定，分析调查隐喻能力发展需要考虑的因素并提出隐喻能力发展研究的思路。第 5 章主要汇报一项针对中国高级英语学习者隐喻能力发展所做的实验研究；第 6 章运用隐喻生涯假说的内核思想对二语学习者隐喻能力的发展进行阐释，并从此得出一些对外语教学的启示。

诚然，隐喻生涯假说在二语学习者隐喻能力习得研究中的适用性尚有待进一步的检验，二语学习者隐喻能力发展的研究可以从不同角度展开、亦应当可以从其他的角度进行阐释。本书旨在抛砖引玉，引起同行对二语隐喻能力发展研究的关注。

Abstract

For the past two decades, applied linguists around the world have made sporadic attempts to develop learners' metaphorical competence (MC) in second language (L2) classroom. Such efforts in general, however, were without a sound theory to guide their classroom practices. Therefore, it remains unclear how L2 learners develop their MC in the instructional context on the one hand, and what theory to account for the developmental pattern on the other. Hence, the present book makes an attempt to establish a theoretical framework to track and to explain L2 learners' development of MC in instructional context.

Chapter 1 first defines some basic concepts relevant to the research paradigm of the present study, and discusses the role MC plays in L2 proficiency.

Chapter 2 depicts three lines of studies on L2 MC. One describes L2 learners' MC at a particular point in time, another explores factors that affect the development of MC in L2 learners, and still another examines the effect of instruction on the L2 learners' development of MC. Problems with current studies are discussed.

Chapter 3 endeavors to seek for a theoretical framework to describe and explain L2 learners' development of MC. It first introduces different psychological models on metaphor processing, which provide grounds for comprehension of the theoretical framework we propose to investigate L2 MC, namely, the COM Hypothesis. Next, the basic tenets of the Hypothesis are outlined with empirical evidence in support of it.

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Chapter 4 redefines and operationalizes L2 MC, and then analyzes of the key factors that must be addressed concerning the development of L2 MC within the framework of the COM Hypothesis.

Chapter 5 reports an empirical study conducted on the development of MC in advanced Chinese EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners through an investigation of their acquisition of three types of novel nominal metaphors in four instructed conditions.

Chapter 6 attempts to account for advanced Chinese EFL learners' development of MC within the COM Hypothesis. It gives an in-depth analysis of two variables that the COM Hypothesis assumes to affect the development of MC, namely, metaphor type and learning condition. Several conclusions are drawn from the empirical study. Firstly, the nature of metaphor and the way in which it is processed during comprehension is closely correlated. Specifically, relational metaphors are superior to attributional metaphors in facilitating L2 learners' development of MC. Secondly, instructional techniques such as conventionalization, multiple presentations, similarity rating and similarity discrimination are effective in facilitating L2 learners' acquisition of metaphoric categories of the target terms, indicating that metaphor instruction has a robust effect on L2 learners' development of MC. Finally, the COM Hypothesis might serve as an adequate framework for the investigation into the development of L2 MC.

List of Abbreviations

CET	College English Test
COM	Career of Metaphor
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MC	Metaphorical Competence
MFPT	Metaphor Form Preference Task
MIT	Metaphor Interpretation Task
MPT	Metaphor Production Task
MR	Mere Repetition
SD	Similarity Discrimination
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SME	Structure-mapping Engine
SR	Similarity Rating
SRT	Stimulated Recall Task
TEM	Test for English Majors
VT	Varied Target

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Chapter 1

General Introduction

1.1 Metaphorical Competence—A Neglected Dimension in Second Language Pedagogy

The past three decades witness a metaphormania. In their seminal book *Metaphor We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claim that metaphor is pervasive not just in language, but in thought and action as well, and that human conceptual system is "fundamentally metaphoric in nature" (p. 3). Indeed, metaphors permeate the language to the extent that much of our thinking is metaphorical. For instance, Pollio, Barlow, Fine, and Polio (1977) estimated that the average English speakers created over 3,000 metaphors per week, or 1.80 novel and 4.08 conventional or dead metaphors per minute of speech, revealing that metaphor has governed the form and content of ordinary communication and social interaction. Gresser, Long and Mio (1989, cited in Bowdle, 1998: 2) also found that speakers used approximately one unique metaphor for every 25 words. Winner (1982, cited in Danesi, 1994: 456) points out that if "people were limited to strictly literal language, communication would be severely curtailed, if not terminated". Thus, metaphor has been recognized as an essential tool in language, thought, and communication (Steen, 2008: 214), an indispensable ingredient of language acquisition (Rumelhart, 1979), and a major source of conceptual change and learning (Gentner & Bowdle, 2001; Gentner & Wolff, 2000). Influenced by Lakoff and Johnson's revolutionary work, the 1980s saw a

mushrooming of literature on metaphor and "the interest in the study of its structure, mechanism, function, effect, and cognitive nature have (sic) grown rapidly in a broad range of disciplines: linguistics, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, education, science, as well as literary criticism and rhetoric" (Yu, 1998: 1).

However, compared with the craze for metaphor research in disciplines such as linguistics, philosophy, psychology, studies on metaphor in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) during the past decades have not received due attention. As early as the late 1970s, Gardner and Winner (1978) proposed the theoretical construct of metaphoric competence in their article entitled "The development of metaphoric competence: Implications for humanistic disciplines". It was not until almost a decade later that SLA researchers such as Danesi (1986, cf. Danesi, 1992) and Low (1988) recognize that MC is of equal importance in L2 proficiency. In his article entitled "The development of metaphorical competence: A neglected dimension in second language pedagogy", Danesi calls for concerns on the value of developing MC in L2 pedagogy. Low (1988) also argues that metaphor should be given a more important place in language teaching. Both scholars consider metaphor as a topic of considerable relevance to SLA and suggest that it should be given a more important place in language teaching than it had been in the past. However, even with these scholars' enthusiastic attempts to advocate the instilment of MC in L2 learners, Cameron and Low (1999) observed another decade later that metaphor "seems largely to have passed applied linguistics by" (p. xii).

In recent years, the notion of MC has also received increasing attention among Chinese scholars. However, systematic research on how Chinese L2 learners acquire their MC is limited and the route of the development of MC is yet to be known. This might be due to the fact that, on the one hand, there are still confusions on the definitions

or characterization of MC, and, on the other hand, there has not been a ready-made theory or framework to track the development of this competence in first language (L1) or L2 research up to date. Hence, it is the aim of the present book to explore, firstly, a theoretical model or framework to describe L2 learners' development of MC, and secondly, how advanced Chinese learners of English develop their MC in a context of EFL. Since the scope of metaphor is broad, the above aims are to be achieved through an in-depth investigation into the learners' acquisition of one type of metaphor, namely, English novel nominal metaphors. Before proceeding further, however, it is necessary to define some basic terms relevant to the study of MC.

1.2 Defining and Classifying Metaphor

The subject of metaphor has been the focus of much thought and research since Aristotle. There exists, however, an enormous confusion in the field of metaphor research as regards the definition of this construct. According to Aristotle (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 21, cited in Harris & Taylor, 1997: 19), "metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else". Similarly, to Burke (1945, cited in Cameron, 1999/2001: 3), "metaphor is a device for seeing something in terms of something else". Miller (1979: 226) regards metaphor as "a comparison statement with parts left out". Barlow et al. (cited in Ortony, Reynods & Arter, 1978: 922) define metaphor as "an implied comparison between two things of unlike nature that have something in common". In Vosniadou's (1987: 871) view, a metaphor is a meaningful statement that communicates something about a concept by comparing it or juxtaposing it to a similar concept from a different conventional category. Fraser (1979: 176) considers a metaphor as "an instance of the nonliteral use of language in which the intended propositional content must be determined by the construction of an analogy". Modern cognitive linguists Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 117)

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