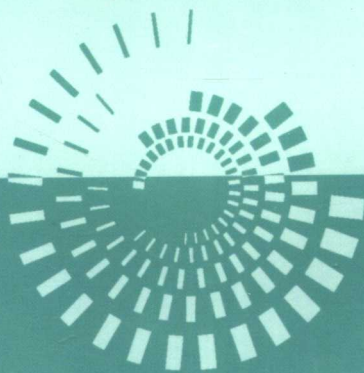# 英语语言学与教学丛书

二语习得的隐喻处理

The Processing of Metaphor in Second Language Acquisition

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上海市高等学校教育高地英语项目

英语语言学与教学丛书

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Preface

The research of metaphor, in whatever discipline, has advanced by leaps and bounds in the past few decades. Stuck to one's own soil, one can easily find prosperous self-evident fruits. Nevertheless, no one will not believe the truth that there stands the promise of a more productive development if one, aware that nothing of this sort of undertaking can be fortuitous and fortunate in the name of a genuine study and realising that the confinement of individual wit is more often pinching, steps out of the kingdom of the innermost self and finds the real paucity out of the ideal prosperity. This requirement, like many others for the same sake of goodness for an investigation *per se*, appeals even more significantly when a universal is being sought after impulsively. What is the processing of metaphor like in the setting of second language acquisition? Is it the same as is done by native speakers? If it is, is it due to the conceptual metaphor? If not, where does the difference occur? Having been drawn to thinking about these issues mysterious as they are to the tempted mind, I attempt, in the humour of an academic pursuit, to propose without reservation an investigation of metaphor dealt with by L2 learners, a study which may, as I see to it and in the meantime hope others of similar temperament would get along with the view too, enrich the field of metaphor research fenced with its own outposts and most likely feed back nutrients into the field of second language acquisition.

In the first chapter, this book discusses the expected value in and the required framework of theories and methods for researching metaphor in SLA. To look for the theories ever established or to be established, it surveys a considerable variety of widely recognised definitions in Chapter 2, settling on the one that metaphor is not only a linguistic form common enough in language communication, but a process and product of cognition as well, fundamental and fascinating. In discussing the nature respective of literal meaning and metaphorical meaning on the ground of truth value, I offer a set of four norms — reference reality, sentence formality, coherence gradability, and utterance intentionality, to direct attention to the constructs natural in metaphor processing as a means of language communication. On types of metaphor, the differentiation made by Lakoff and Johnson about conceptual metaphor and linguistic metaphor is examined, which leads me to meet with an entity of cultural metaphor that I suppose breeds and guides conceptual metaphor, a view from the phenomenon that concepts stem out of culture, rotate with culture, and vanish, in the form of absorption, along with culture, when the creators and the users of concepts also change as their cultural communities change. In line with this view, dead metaphors are no longer dead in L2 acquisition; they can be accepted as a polysemous aspect of lexical meaning, exposing a relation between metaphor and polysemy. I, therefore, agree that metaphor is the source of polysemy, and further find that it is metaphor that determines the polysemous development of lexical meaning. With regard to semantic attributes and metaphoric salience, I put forth a couple of supplementary accounts for the basic formulaic

relation in "*X is Y* ", such as reflexivity, symmetry, and transferability, all well geared to explaining the equivalence relationship between *X* and *Y*. On the basis of this equivalence relationship, three requisites are established for the interpretation of metaphor at work: relative background, hypothetical premises, and explanatory statements. These are all thought to be adequate in describing, analysing, and evaluating the incongruity between Topic and Vehicle, the mechanism for the generation and transmission of metaphorical meaning. As for the properties of Topic and Vehicle in being concrete and abstract, I argue for a circumlocutionary means of expression cushioned in metaphorical communication for an intended purpose, especially those new and few compared with the conventionalised metaphors. The issue of identification is discussed with concern about various processing conditions observed in some studies by other researchers and in response, suggestions are therefore made of necessary modifications to meet with the processing conditions specific in SLA. As it irresistibly concerns the classic theories of comparison, such a postulate is made that the processing of metaphor is not a sheer comparison between Topic and Vehicle; it, meanwhile, evokes an intrinsic comparison between the metaphor and the perceiver, an unavoidable interactive process more complicated and then important. Emphasis is consequently placed on the coordinating function between experiential reality and imaginative reality in imaging and mapping. This attempt is plainly evidenced in the fact that image and culture co-exist, with culture shaping image and image, in return, reflecting culture. Because of the disturbances, whether serial or

piecemeal, from mother tongue transfered onto target language, limited vocabulary in store, and cultural factors upon metaphor processing, a conspicuous difference is argued for in processing route and speed among native speakers and L2 learners respectively. If the ability of processing metaphor is enacted as a criterion for differentiation, any deviation from handling metaphor appropriately in terms of varying context is then in effect a failure of problem-solving by means of language. But this inference readily produces a paradox in SLA: L2 learners are surely able to solve problems of various sorts, but they are not equally able to cope with metaphor. Why? Clarification is in need.

In order to obtain a relevant answer, Chapter 3 takes the empirical perspective to further the investigation on metaphor processing in L2 acquisition. First, it describes the fundamental features in categorisation of concepts and L2 acquisition, so as to decide on the universal principles, specific operations, and the relation in between. It is noted that, due to the far-fetching but content-limited nature characteristic of Lakoff and Johnson's reductive analysis of conceptual metaphor, the resulting range for observation does not agreeably have a pervasive significance. By contrast, operations on denominal metaphor and novel metaphor lead to an understanding of various aspects in metaphor processing. This synthetic analysis fits in describing those primary features like MT transfer and interlanguage in respect to the fact that the culture of MT has already set up a conceptual system for L2 learners who, in L2 acquisition, shall construct a new language system to assist them in approach to TL. The ideal relation between the two systems is seen in MT's

submission to TL. However, the relation is reversed in time of trouble, because MT has been firmly held to since birth and resemblance resides somewhat misleadingly between MT and TL. It is therefore not boldly suspected that metaphor processing in L2 acquisition shall bear differences. As an empirical support, a series of items designed to investigate the inclination in metaphor processing among L2 learners is included to corroborate those suppositions ever made about their reactions to the conventional figure of speech. The investigation uncovers many distinctive features of L2 learners' processing from a group of sophomores of English major and a group of postgraduate students of the same orientation. In dealing with the required tasks, the subjects showed the general ability of logical or metaphorical reasoning, the inclination to use simile to facilitate metaphor processing, and a slower speed for metaphor than that for simile and literal expressions. It was also confirmed that cultural factors and L2 learners' word power affect metaphor processing. As a result, this study reaches the following conclusions.

1. The cultural factors in the constructs of metaphor affect the comprehension and production of metaphor. Different cultures yield different metaphorical expressions with regard to conceptual metaphor.

2. Along with Conclusion 1, an appropriate processing meets with reference reality, sentence formality, coherence gradability, and utterance intentionality.

3. Along with Conclusion 2, L2 learners will use strategies different from those used by native speakers. They are inclined to process metaphor after

implicitly converting it into simile.

4. Along with Conclusion 3, it takes more time and efforts for L2 learners to process metaphor than it does for native speakers.

5. L2 learners' failures in processing metaphor appropriately are most likely caused by their limited word power and cultural difference. For L2 learners, explanatory context is conducive to correct processing of metaphor.

Also, such a study as is shaped in the form of a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy owes a great deal to a great many people and institutions. Gratitude is expressed by the beneficiary to those whose materials and theories are explicitly referred to and discussed, to those whose contributions to and shares in the development of the concerned discipline(s) are forgot as well as remembered, and to those whose comments and suggestions have kept on helping shape the draft version and the final printed copy.

Above all, I am deeply grateful to my advisor Professor Dai Weidong, whose care, scholastic and humanistic, timely and constant, of my studies and research has been witnessed and enjoyed throughout my stay at Shanghai International Studies University and shall strongly encourage me forever. Without this care of his, the present copy must have been poor; without his high appreciation of my presentation at the time of entry admission, there would have been nothing for me at present.

I would like to extend my gratitude to those professors at the English College and the Graduate Office who were kind

enough to help me with the programmes and who appreciated my stay and study with them in the past. By the same token, my thanks go to friends, colleagues, teachers, and managerial staff at Shanghai Normal University. In particular, I thank Professor Huang Cidong for his comments and suggestions on my MA thesis part of whose theories have been developed in this current writing.

Thanks should also be given to the following professors: Lu Guoqiang, Dai Weihua, Zhou Shen, and Wang Tongfu, the late chief editor of Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. It is their reviews and remarks about my study that, indeed, encouraged me to move persistently forth towards an in-depth and -width understanding of metaphor of which the publication of this book is one of the steps in progress.

Undoubtedly, I am indebted to my family, especially my parents. Enduring all the chores and sores in their life, they have nurtured me with such an unyielding spirit that features the philosophy of learning, the logic of gaining, and the law of human being.

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Cai Longquan
January18, 2007
Shanghai

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Tokens and Abbreviations

" "	Direct quotations
' '	Terms and meaning explanations
( )	Sources and originally small letters
[2-1]	Examples of metaphorical expressions for illustration
CED	*A Chinese-English Dictionary* (Revised Edition)
LEM	*Lexicon for English Majors: A Supplement to the English Curriculum*
lion	Italics for exemplar words, book titles, and Latin words
MT	mother tongue
OCDL	*Oxford Concise Dictionary of Linguistics*
OED	*The Oxford English Dictionary*
RDLL	*Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*
TL	target language
Vehicle	Conventional terms
WAR	Capitals for conceptual metaphorical expressions
WEUDEL	*Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*

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Chapter One
Why Researching
Metaphor in SLA

1.1 Introduction

Metaphor is a tool. It is used in language communication
as a vehicle in transportation. Just as a vehicle helps carry
passengers from one place to another, metaphor helps convey
speakers' thoughts by varying the forms of their expressions.
The usefulness of metaphor is so widespread and conspicuous
that paradoxically often speakers become unaware of and
hearers pay little attention to the occurrence, prevalence, and
dominance of metaphor in language communication. It could
have been the hearers' reactive indifference that results in
speakers' proactive indigence, or the speakers' active insolence
has brought about the hearers' reactive diffidence. These
hypothetical concerns, along with many others, about the use
and usefulness of metaphor in language communication have

evoked no one but those philologists, linguists and the like who, out of their professional dispositions and obligations, have attempted answers and solutions, whether resolute or tentative. Unsurprisingly, metaphor has set up a pool of cross-studies.

1.2 Coming of the issue

Traditional views about metaphor are a matter of rhetoricians and linguists. They enjoy talking about the meaningfulness of metaphor in terms of compact phraseology, vivid symbolisation, and high craftsmanship (Ortony 1975). So draped are answers to such questions as "Why do people use metaphorical expressions instead of saying literally what they mean?" "How do metaphorical expressions work when speakers communicate more than what they say?" "How do hearers understand what speakers communicate rather than what they say in metaphorical expressions?" "What are the principles for hearers to formulate metaphorical expressions?" And "Do different metaphors work in different ways?" These questions, which may go beyond the reach of rhetoric or linguistic explanations, are approached differently by Lakoff and Johnson in their seminal study *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). Encouraged by the ubiquity of metaphor in daily speech, Lakoff and Johnson set out exploring these issues together with further concerns like "Why do people use metaphors so frequently in language, problem-solving, remembering, creativity, and so forth?" "Do people think metaphorically?" "Where do metaphors come from?" As a result, they find that metaphor is essential or even

indispensable for people to communicate about abstract, difficult-to-talk-about ideas. They, therefore, believe that metaphor is indeed necessary, not just as nice and ornamental as Aristotle sees it (Lakoff & Johnson 1991), and conclude that, in contrast to and in control of linguistic forms of metaphor, there is what they call "conceptual metaphor" guiding the way people think about what they are going to say. Pros and cons come in response at once. Indeed, Lakoff and Johnson's studies have called forth legions of investigation and clarification in various disciplines.

That the study of metaphor has developed from the rhetoric embellishment of Aristotle's age to the cognitive achievement of present time has witnessed its enduring vigour and enthusiasm in ever growing queries and inquiries throughout the two thousand and four hundred years. Revisiting metaphor, schools of theories have been given birth to one after another, terms and terminology cradled now and then, and publications financially fed up here and there. It is apparent that the study must be rewarding, and it does appear that the study is reaching farther and farther, into fields beckoning metaphorical interpretations and fields rendering their interpretations of metaphor as well. The making of these reciprocal interpretations can be labelled applying metaphor.

In 1999, two British scholars, Lynne Cameron from University of Leeds and Graham Low from University of York, co-edited *Researching and Applying Metaphor*, marking out in earnest the field for the applied research of metaphor. This eclectic volume consists of twelve theses with regard to twelve subject matters set proportionately in four topical parts: Key issues in metaphor research, From theory to data, Analysing

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metaphor in naturally occurring data, and Analysing metaphor in elicited data. The leading paper, "Operationalising 'metaphor' for applied linguistic research" (Cameron 1999: 1-30), outlines the issue of how to carry out the research of metaphor in terms of applied linguistics. So addressed is the issue that the third part cuts straight into three correlating perspectives. "Who framed SLA research? Problem framing and metaphorical accounts of the SLA research process" (Block 1999: 135-148) displays the interest in how to use metaphorical language to frame and explain the issues in second language acquisition (SLA). "Bridges to learning: Metaphors of teaching, learning and language" (Cortazzi & Jin 1999: 149-176) pries tentatively into a comparative case of metaphorical understanding and expressions about the concepts of teaching and language among sampled native language teachers and second language (L2) or foreign language students. "Corpus-based research into metaphor" (Deignan 1999: 177-199) lays the ground, empirical rather than introspective, for researching metaphor statistically and therefore objectively. Carefully designed to be landmarks for the applied research of metaphor, these three papers tend to post out a stretch open to and in immediate connection with specific research interest and in specific research investment. One aspect in perspective is for sure the relation between metaphor and L2 acquisition, or how metaphor is processed in L2 acquisition, an issue not yet ever seriously considered and investigated.

The year of 2002 saw the publication of a couple of related papers at home as part of the fruit of the First National Conference of Cognitive Linguistics and as a harbinger of