

范文芳 著

Systemic-Functional Approach to Grammatical Metaphor

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语法隐喻理论研究

外语教学与研究出版社

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS

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A SYSTEMIC-FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO GRAMMATICAL METAPHOR

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Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press

(京)新登字 155 号

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

语法隐喻理论研究/范文芳著. - 北京:外语教学与研究出版社, 2001
ISBN 7-5600-2174-3

I. 语… II. 范… III. 英语-隐喻-理论研究 IV. H314

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2001)第 05489 号

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语法隐喻理论研究

范文芳 著

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责任编辑:刘博然

出版发行:外语教学与研究出版社

社 址:北京市西三环北路 19 号 (100089)

网 址: <http://www.fltrp.com.cn>

印 刷:北京外国语大学印刷厂

开 本:850×1168 1/32

印 张:6.75

字 数:120 千字

版 次:2001 年 4 月第 1 版 2001 年 4 月第 1 次印刷

印 数:1—1000 册

书 号:ISBN 7-5600-2174-3/H·1159

定 价:8.90 元

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如有印刷、装订质量问题出版社负责调换

序

我过去对隐喻和语法隐喻了解不多，可以说是门外汉。近年来，我写了一些有关隐喻和语法隐喻的文章。是什么动力导致这一变化的呢？本书作者范文芳和她的研究，对我起了很大的推动作用。

1995年我在香港中文大学访学时，文芳来信征求我的意见，说她准备把对语法隐喻的研究作为她的博士论文选题。显然，要指导这样的题目，对我会有困难。但我在博士生选题上一贯奉行两个原则：一个是尊重学生自己的选择，这一点是从我自己的老师韩礼德那里学来的。让学生研究他/她本人不感兴趣的问题，收效不大。另一个是不想以自己所长去套住学生，这样培养出来的学生不易超越老师，不能有所突破。这不是说我不懂装懂，糊弄学生，而是我认为培养博士生的过程最好是老师和学生共同学习、共同研究、共同提高的过程，也是一个青出于蓝而胜于蓝的过程。如果学生超不过老师，那意味着倒退，意味着没有进步，那是教育工作的失败。鉴于这样的认识，我同意了本书作者的选题。于是为了指导学生，我自己先当上学生了。

选题确定后，文芳通过种种途径，收集了不少材料，看了不少书，与国内外学者积极交流，对一些问题能深入思考，这保证了研究课题的顺利完成和反映在本书中的许多特色。

首先，有关语法隐喻的研究是在上世纪八十年代中期才开始的，在我国更晚，因此我认为文芳抓住了一个很重要的选题，填补了我国在这方面的空白。据了解，国内已有一些年轻学者表示有志于语法隐喻的研究。

对语法隐喻，人们可以有这样那样的界定和研究方法，其

中，系统功能语法对此问题起步早，成果多，文芳把它作为进行研究的理论支柱，这个决定是正确的。

但是文芳没有照搬理论，她发现在系统功能语法内部，存在着不同观点的争论，如韩礼德，Martin, Ravelli, Mathiessen, Goatly 等对语法隐喻都有各自的解读。因此这项研究首先是整理消化这些不同的观点，理清头绪。从本书的内容看，作者做到了。

文芳也注意到系统功能语法学派以外的观点，如美国功能主义者对象似性和语法化的研究，Lakoff 等人从认知科学对隐喻的研究。本书表明，作者能从不同的土壤中吸收营养，孕育培植自己的观点。

正是在上述工作的基础上，文芳提出了语法隐喻的三大元功能模式。三大元功能（概念功能，人际功能，语篇功能）是系统功能语法的理论，语法隐喻又是系统功能语法学家研究的内容，但把语法隐喻放在三大元功能框架下建立一个完整的体系则是本书作者的尝试。澳大利亚学者 Martin 曾讨论过语篇隐喻，但他对语法隐喻的整个系统没有作过系统的归纳。这是阅读本书时需要注意的。其次，为了论证自己的观点，作者对一些语篇做了细致的分析，虚实结合，使本书立论有据。

当然，语法隐喻还有许多问题尚未澄清，我们不能期待一个研究项目、一本著作，毕其功于一役，在文芳面前的道路还很长，相信她能将这项研究坚持下去，精益求精，取得更大突破、更大成就。

胡壮麟

2000年4月14日

北京大学畅春园

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study has grown out of my Ph. D. thesis, which was completed at the Department of English, Peking University in 1997. In the process of my preparation for the Ph. D. thesis, I received invaluable help from many people in many ways. At this moment when I am just about to have the book published, I would like to mention some of the names who helped me as a token of my gratitude. My debt to many other scholars whose names are not mentioned here can be suggested by my citations and the references.

I am especially grateful to my doctoral supervisor, Professor Hu Zhuanglin. He was a truly great guide. His lectures, his books and his private instructions helped me understand the richness of modern linguistics in general and systemic-functional theory in particular. Under his encouragement and help, I accepted the challenge of exploring systemic-functional theory as my general field of investigation and grammatical metaphor (GM) as my specific topic of research. His instructions were insightful and invaluable: thanks to him, now I know the wonder of GM and the general meaning-making power of grammar! My intellectual debt to him is huge; and it is of that wonderful kind that cannot be repaid, keeps growing, and continues to serve as a rich resource in my academic life.

I am very grateful to Michael Halliday, Louise Ravelly, and Peter Collins. I was fortunate enough to have met them at the "22nd International Systemic-functional Congress" held in Beijing in July 1995. Their interest in my paper on GM presented at the conference greatly encouraged my interest and research; their comments and suggestions helped me get a deeper understanding of GM. Our

discussions over the topic were truly invaluable.

My research work on GM has benefited from many other systemic-functionalists, such as J. R. Martin and Christian Mathiessen. Their works on the general theory of systemic-functional grammar and on GM in particular have been invaluable to me. Their works have provided me with great insights and some of the materials I drew have made my study systematic.

As the field of GM is new, I faced the serious problem of getting materials. I was very fortunate to have got to know many linguists abroad. They sent me a lot of materials. Through e-mail and surface mail, Louise Ravelli and Andrew Goatly took the trouble and kindly sent me their own papers on GM which were of tremendous value to me. Mohsen Ghadessay and Peter Collins sent me some papers on this topic and provided me with the latest information. I owe special debt to Hans Streit, who helped me get several books and some papers on metaphor and GM and he also provided me with a lot of references which enabled me to trace a lot of invaluable materials. These materials and our correspondence helped me significantly.

I am greatly indebted to many professors who were members of the examination board of my Ph. D. Dissertation Trial Oral Defense and my final Dissertation Defense: Wang Fengxin, Shen Dan, Jiang Wangqi, Gao Yihong, Zhao Shikai, Fang Yan, Gao Yuan etc. They gave me their critical comments which have improved my dissertation significantly. I am also extremely grateful to Wang Wei, Fan Yagang, Tian Guisen, Yang Yonglin, Li Zhanzi etc. I have benefited tremendously from discussions with them privately and in our Weekly *Linguistic Saloons*. I am also grateful for their support interpersonally.

My greatest debt of gratitude is to my parents and my husband for their love, encouragement and support they have been giving me all these years.

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1

Introduction

1.1 *The general idea of metaphor*

Ever since Aristotle, people have been intrigued and baffled by the mystery of metaphor. Researchers from various academic fields have approached metaphor from very different perspectives and established a rain of theories of metaphor, and even researchers from the same theory often vary in their accounts for this phenomenon. But in a very broad sense, views of metaphor can be divided into two parts: views prior to and since Reddy's classic essay, "The Conduit Metaphor." (1993) The former can be called the Classical Theories of Metaphor and the latter the Contemporary Theories of Metaphor. In classical theories, metaphor is seen as a matter of language and one or more words for a concept are used outside of their normal conventional meaning to express a "similar" concept. For instance, words like "mother" in "Failure is the mother of success." and "wolf" in "Man is a wolf." are not used in their normal everyday sense. It is undoubtedly correct for classical theorists to notice the unusual use of words in metaphorical expressions, but their theories on metaphor have a lot of problems. One simple confusing problem at hand is that they can not tell whether words like "Lu Xun" and "bread" are metaphors or not in "Many people like reading Lu Xun." and "You cannot really talk about morality when people do

not have enough bread to eat."

In the long history of the study of metaphor, it is the cognitivists who have made a breakthrough. They no longer treat metaphor as a concept used outside of their normal conventional meaning to express a "similar" concept as the classical theories on metaphor do. Lakoff maintains that "our conceptual system is largely metaphorical," and "the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor." (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 3) To them, we talk about ARGUMENT as WAR because we conceive of them that way — and we act according to the way we conceive of things. "The concept is metaphorically structured, the activity is metaphorically structured, and, consequently, the language is metaphorically structured." (ibid: 5) But in their book *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson do not directly say what metaphor really is. They just claim that "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 5) without further clarification. As we can see, this statement actually cannot be used to distinguish between what is metaphorical from what is non-metaphorical. In other words, "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" is not necessarily the "essence of metaphor," for it is also a common way of nonmetaphorical language. For example, in "She is a Helen," we are obviously understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another, but we do not usually take it as a metaphor. Lakoff moves a step forward on the cognitive theory of metaphor in his more recent paper "The contemporary theory of metaphor" by defining metaphor as "a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system." (Lakoff, 1993: 203) Here he makes a change from the former "understanding and

experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” to the present statement of “a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system.” The locus of metaphor is thus not in the language but in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another. For example, in the “ARGUMENT IS WAR” metaphor, arguments and wars belong to two different conceptual domains — verbal discourse and armed conflict — and here we are talking about argument in terms of war. In other words, the two subjects “argument” and “war” should come from two different conceptual domains. In short, the idea of “cross conceptual domains” becomes the key for us to understand the nature of metaphor.

1.2 *Some early studies on the metaphorical nature of grammar*

1.2.1 Some observations on the metaphorical nature of grammar

It is fair to say that most of the studies of metaphor, from Aristotle to the present day, have been almost fully concerned with lexical metaphor. Aristotle, for example, even defines metaphor within the confinement of words. He simply considers metaphor to be one of the eight different forms of a Noun — a strange word as it is called — and it “consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else.” (On Poetics, ch. 21: 1457b) In other words, he takes metaphor as the transference of a word from one thing to another, the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy

(ibid). For example, Aristotle takes the word "all" in "All gods and men slept through the night." as metaphor, since "all is a species of many." (The Poetics of Aristotle, ch. 25)

Aristotle's idea of metaphor as words leads researchers from different fields to concentrate their minds on lexical metaphor for centuries. As a result, people may only think of lexical metaphor in particular when mentioning metaphor in general. But the awareness of the metaphorical nature of grammar is not a rare phenomenon, nor is it confined to the modern times only. As early as in the Middle Ages, people believe that grammar is necessarily related to logic or nature and this belief encouraged the use of grammatical concepts as the metaphorical equivalents of these things. Medieval thought equates the processes of grammar with the processes of nature. The speculative grammarians, for example, present the grammar "as an accurate reflection of the constitution of reality." The prevailing view is expressed by John of Salisbury: "While grammar has developed to some extent, and indeed mainly, as an invention of man, still it imitates nature, from which it partly derives in origin. Furthermore, it tends, as far as possible, to conform to nature in all respects." (Alford, 1982)

Later on, cognitivists come to maintain that natural language is a product of the human mind and the most important dimension of language is the cognitive world of the human speaker. Langacker states "that grammar itself serves an 'imagic' function and that much of it has a figurative character. Grammar (like lexicon) embodies conventional imagery." (Langacker, 1987: 38-39) Grammar (syntax) is thus taken to be as symbolic as lexicon and morphology, the differences between them being only a matter of degree along a continuum of symbolic units. "Lexicon and grammar form a

continuum of symbolic elements. Like lexicon, grammar provides for the structuring and symbolization of conceptual content, and is thus imagic in character." (Langacker, 1987: 276)

The idea that meaning permeates grammatical structure is not new, but in equating semantics with conceptualization, cognitive linguists relate grammar to other areas of human cognition. Grammar is considered a conceptual organizing system. Like other categories, in particular word classes, units of grammar are prototypically structured. Givon (1979: 321-21; 1985a: 210-11) redefines the main word classes along prototypical lines: nouns, verbs and adjectives are characterized with respect to the same semantic and perceptually salient dimension, that of time stability. Nouns prototypically denote individualized, concrete, solid and visible entities, which do not, or only slowly and unnoticeably, change in time. Prototypical verbs, on the other hand, denote actions or events which lead to perceptually salient changes of entities. The most time-stable percepts and the least time-stable percepts are universally encoded as nouns and verbs respectively, and occupy the two poles of a scale of time stability. Nouns which relate to less time-stable percepts like "rain" and verbs which relate to fairly time-stable percepts like "stay" occupy scalar points some distance away from their respective prototypical members.

Lakoff also puts forward a tentative assumption that if concepts such as time, quantity, state, change, action, modality, and even the concept of a category, all of which enter normally into the grammars of languages, are indeed metaphorical in nature, then metaphor becomes central to grammar (Lakoff, 1993: 212).