The Cognition and Image Preservation in the Translation of Metaphor from English to Chinese

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Abstract

Metaphor is viewed in a broad sense in this paper, which is no longer a mere rhetorical device but a mode of thinking. This violation against the traditional concept of metaphor will definitely result in great changes in both the cognition and translation of metaphor. Firstly, this paper aims at casting off the conventional idea of metaphor and widening the cognition scope of it. Secondly, this paper focuses on the selection of metaphor translation methods to preserve the image contained in metaphor for carrying out significant cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: Thinking mode, Metaphor cognition, Image preservation

1. Introduction

Traditionally, metaphor is merely a rhetorical device, which functions mainly as the aesthetic device. However, there came a great break-through in metaphorical study with the publication of Metaphors We Live By, a work written jointly by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson: metaphor is addressed as an entity pervasive not only in language but also in thought and action(Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Therefore, great changes have been brought into the cognition and translation of metaphor. This paper firstly introduces metaphor in its broad sense with the aim of enabling readers to comprehend metaphor from a completely new perspective. Relevant theories are introduced for providing readers with a clear picture of metaphor in its new sense. The second purpose of this paper lies on the selection of metaphor translation methods so as to preserve the imagery contained in metaphor. Certain examples are given for enabling readers to have a good command of image preservation in metaphor translation.

2. Cognition of Metaphor

2.1 The Definition of Metaphor

2.1.1 Metaphor in Its Narrow Sense

In its narrow sense, metaphor might be defined as a figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another. Three components are included in a metaphor: the tenor (or object), the vehicle (or image), and the ground (or sense). Taking this sentence for example, "Hope is man's bread", the tenor should be "hope", the vehicle, "bread", and the ground "the necessity of mankind". (Wang Yulong, 1996).

2.1.2 Metaphor in Its Broad Sense

In its broad sense, it refers to any figurative expression, including the transferred sense of a physical word, personification of an abstraction, and application of a word or collocation to what it does not literally denote. All polysemous words and most English phrasal verbs are potentially metaphorical. Metaphor in this sense seeks its root cause in the human mind and addresses the relationship between mind and cognition Therefore it can be defined as a cognitive process facilitating human conceptual thinking.

The initiative idea of metaphor being addressed as an entity pervasive in language, thought and action counts as a turning point in the metaphorical study. It is no exaggeration to view it as a great break-through because function, classification, identification, comprehension as well as the translation essence and methods of metaphor have been marvelously changed.

2.2 Classification of Metaphor

Ways to classify metaphors vary greatly based on different criteria of classification. And the same is quite true with metaphor classification in both broad and narrow senses.

2.2.1 Some Traditional Methods of Metaphor Classification

Firstly, some traditional ways like one possible way, invented according to various structures of metaphors, divides

them into four kinds: Sustained Metaphor, Extended Metaphor, Dead Metaphor, and Mixed Metaphor.

2.2.2 The Classification of Metaphor in Its Broad Sense.

Secondly, metaphor in a broad sense can be classified based on different criteria. Then Mr. Shu Dingfang roughly classified linguistic metaphors, on the basis of their syntactic, semantic and cognitive characteristics, into explicit and implicit, radical and derivative, similarity-based and similarity-creation etc.

1) a) An explicit metaphor is commonly known as simile, which is a comparison of A to B with indicating words such as "like, seem" etc. For example, *Encyclopedias are like gold mines.*

b) However, metaphor seldom displays the similarity between the tenor and the vehicle. For instance, "Man is a thinking reed", whose sense (or ground) is quite simple and aims mainly at emphasizing the vulnerability of human beings(Dingfang Shu, 2000).

2) Metaphor can also be classified into radical and derivative metaphor.

a) *A radical metaphor is a central conceptual metaphor, as the one in "Life is a journey."*

b) A derivative metaphor is usually implied, yet acting as a reflection of the early recognition towards the nature and the world of human beings. For instance, *"Understanding or knowing is seeing."* is a radical metaphor. Its relevant or derivative metaphors may contain verbs like: 1), see, glimpse, see the light, see through, get the picture; 2), look at, examine, survey, regard, etc.

3) a) A similarity-based metaphor is one that is based on familiarity, that is, the generally accepted similarity between Tenor and Vehicle. For instance, in "John is a pig", the metaphor based on the similarity of "dirtiness, laziness and stupidity" between "pig" and "John" is included.

b) A similarity-creating metaphor is one that contains similarity that is temporarily unfamiliar to most people. For instance, before the creation of the metaphor "as tender as water", people can hardly detect out any similarity between "tenderness" and "water".

Other metaphor classification methods are listed as follows:

2.3 Function of Metaphor

2.3.1 General Analysis of the Function of Metaphor

Generally, the function of a metaphor is generally two-fold: the first is the referential purpose, describing a mental process or state, a concept, a person, an object, a quality or an action more comprehensively and concisely than is possible in literal or physical language; the second is its pragmatic purpose, simultaneously with the first one, appealing to the senses, to interest, to clarify "graphically", to please, to delight, and to surprise. Hence the first purpose is cognitive while the second aesthetic. If a metaphor is a good one, the two purposes usually fuse well with each other like the content and the form. When metaphor was considered merely a rhetorical device, it attracted our overt attention to its outer features and ornamental function. However, much more function of it can be explored if viewing it in a broad sense as a mode of thinking.

And its function can be described from many aspects**:**

2.3.1.1 From its sources with the development of our thinking modes.

Metaphor was originally considered as only a concrete representation of an abstract concept. For instance, "Sermons are like sleeping pills", in which the dullness and other features are carried out by the characteristics as contained in the vehicle "sleeping pills".

However, with the development of human civilization, metaphor also happens in describing a concrete object in terms of another, a concrete object in terms of an abstract one and an abstract one in terms of another one. The examples listed in the following can somewhat indicate this tendency of the changing function of metaphor.

a) I saw a long honeycomb of streets. (A concrete concept "streets" is described with another concrete word "honeycomb".)

b) When you wear fur, or buy it, you are wearing cruelty, or buying it. (In it the abstract concept "cruelty" is used to express a specific action of human beings: the massacring animals and wearing their furs. Dingfang Shu, 1992).

2.3.1.2 From the Perspective of Cognitive Psychology.

Secondly, if viewed from the perspective of cognitive psychology, the function of metaphor can be described as follows,

Metaphor acts as a cognition mode of the world, a reflection of culture; a universal rule in language and the result of cognition and comprehension of ours in a metaphorical mode.

As what the Class-inclusion of Metaphor theory believes, metaphor is a process of re-classifying the objective world and it unites things of originally different kinds into one. However, this process is often restricted by the cultural mode.

For instance, in the sentence: "My job is a jail", the tenor "job" and the vehicle "jail" belong to different categories. However, the latter embodies the features of being unpleasant and punitive, which are considered to be characteristic of marriage, schools, etc. Hence, anything containing these features could be classified into this category.

Metaphor can also be comprehended as a reproduction of language. However large a vocabulary a language may contain, it is usually incapable of describing so complicated a world (both our inner and outer world), to the full. Metaphor then firstly acts as a key factor in strengthening the power of speech, in retaining the openness and vividness of a linguistic system. For example, certain parts of a computer are given names of mouse, disc, etc. Secondly, it can concisely express a complicated concept. Thirdly, the vivid imagery can be created by a metaphor, for it arouses association and imagination of lively images.

2.4 Identification of metaphor

It is not always easy to identify a chunk of language as metaphors, because it is usually implicit rather than explicit. However, metaphors can be identified in the following possible ways:

2.4.1 The Explicit signal of a metaphor

The first is through the explicit signal of a metaphor: "to put it metaphorically" "speaking metaphorically" or, "in a metaphorical sense" and so on.

2.4.2 The Anomaly in Either Semantics or Pragmatics

The second is through the anomaly either in semantics or in pragmatics with the assumption that the speaker is making sense. In metaphor what is transferred are the relations, which pertain within one semantic field to a second distinct content domain. For example, we say of a basketball player that her playing is "hot" in this game, "hot" is the vehicle, and its semantic field is the field of temperature terms; the domain of the tenor is athletics. Hot and cold are graded antonyms in the temperature field; when they are transferred to sports, we can construe a hot player as one who plays well and scores, while a cold player does not. The antonym of the pair is preserved. Moreover, if a player scores only moderately well, we can say "he was lukewarm in the third quarter." Since "hot" and "cold" are not absolute but graded antonyms, it is therefore possible to capture all sorts of performance in between, and even on the outer extremes.

2.4.3 The Violation of Cooperative Principles

The third is to detect the violation of cooperative maxims; as classified by Grice (1957).

It is generally agreed that metaphorical statements often violate the maxim of quality and the maxim of relevance. Here are a few examples:

I am as hungry for them as for food, I am thirsty for them, and my thirst is overwhelming. Your words are my food, your breath my wine. You are everything to me.

This sentence breaks the maxim of quality and the maxim of relevance. These words appear in a love letter, so the context provides some hint that the sentence cannot be understood literally.

2.5 Comprehension of Metaphor

It has been generally acknowledged that semantic, contextual and cultural information plays a great role in the comprehension of metaphorical expression. But it remains to be seen as to what type of information and how much amount of it is needed for the correct comprehension of a novel metaphor.

It is generally acknowledged that the semantic conflict, also known as semantic deviation, count as the basis of the production of metaphor.

In order to comprehend metaphor well, many theories related to metaphorical comprehension have been proposed, such as Interaction Theory, proposed by Richards (1965) and Black (1962), Mapping Theory, proposed by Lakoff (1987), and the recent Blending Theory, by the coordinate efforts of Fauconnier (1997). And a rough analysis of the said three theories are listed as follows,

2.5.1 Interaction Theory

Experts of this theory hold the opinion that metaphor is a result of the interaction between the tenor and the vehicle.

It can be explained in the case of "Marriage is a zero-sum game", in which a complicated complex is included, which can be described in the following aspects:

a) A "game" is a contest;

b) Between two opponents;

c) In which one player can win only at the expense of the other.

Then the implied meaning of "marriage" can be detected upon the comprehension of "contest", opponents and

especially "winning".

Therefore, one possible way of understanding this metaphor is displayed as follows,

a) A marriage is a substantial struggle;

b) Between two contestants;

c) In which the rewards (might be power, money, satisfaction, etc.) of one contestant are gained only at the expense of the other's.

2.5.2 Mapping Theory

Instead of using terms like Tenor and Vehicle, Mapping Theory adopts "source domain" "target domain" to indicate the directionality of the interaction between these two domains, which is called "mapping". According to this theory, metaphor can be a projection from the source domain to the target domain. One possible example is the sentence: "Life is a journey", in which the source domain

is "journey", the target domain "life".

Obvious characteristics contained in the source domain include:

a) A traveler;

b) The beginning, the process and the ending of the journey;

c) All possible situations in the process of the journey. These characteristics are systematically projected to the domain of "life". Hence there may be such expressions in English:

"He got a head start in life.

I am where I want to be in life.

He's never let anyone get in his way.

He's gone through a lot in life."

The theory holds the point of view that the meaning of metaphor is defined by the meaning and structural characteristics of the source domain.

2.5.3 Blending Theory

According to the Mental Space of Faucconnier, two psychological spaces are included in Metaphor: source psychological space and target psychological space. In Blending Theory, these two spaces provide input for a new psychological space------ the sense of metaphor, as well as another space called generic space, which also attributes to the production of a new space.

Metaphor in this sense is no longer an interaction between the source space and the target space but one existing among the source, target, and generic spaces. For example, in "The doctor is a butcher", four spaces:

a) The source space is relevant to "The doctor";

b) The target space is related to "butcher";

c) Generic space, more abstract, including "doctor", "butcher" and structural relationship between the two;

d) A final blended space..

The interaction of these three spaces contributes to the appearance of a blended space, in which characteristics of three spaces are embodied. Hence the meaning of the metaphor can be defined, as "The doctor is an unqualified one with clumsy skills."

3. Translation of Metaphor

Once the paragraphs above have analyzed metaphor cognition from the five aspects, there will be a clear and scientific process for our identification and comprehension of metaphor. However, in order to realize the goal of cultural communication, metaphor is often translated from one language to another. The translation of metaphor has never been a simple thing, and it will become more complicated due to the widened scope of metaphor. The following part will deal with the translation of metaphor by applying the theories as introduced in the above.

In the 1980s, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson initiated the cognitive study of metaphor. And the study of cognition is mainly concerned with the processing of cognitive information. Moreover, it is motivated by scientific curiosity, by the desire for practical applications, and by the need to provide a foundation for other fields of social sciences. Translation studies belong to this kind of cognitive study. There are some basic assumptions on translation: on the one hand, translation is a verbal process. Therefore it is reasonable to study the process of translation in the light of linguistic methods and research findings. On the other hand, translation is also a cognitive process. The process of translation is

not merely language transference but a mental one, since it involves complicated activities in mind. Therefore, an examination of the process of translation shall incorporate analysis of the basic mental process involved.

Cognitively, translation of metaphors is held as a cognition-oriented mental process, during which the human brain unravels and transmits the cognitive information of the target metaphor. In this way, we assert that the essence of translation of metaphor is virtually a process of cross-cultural transmission of cognition based on the above understanding.

3.1 The Selection of Translation Methods

In order to preserve imagery in different situations, effective translation methods should be cautiously selected in metaphorical translation.

3.1.1 Literal Translation

The firstly and most commonly used method is called literal translation, which is adopted when source and target languages maintain similar cognitive modes, linguistic forms. The image can therefore be transferred directly from one language into another. For examples,

a) During the 1980s, a new drug called crack began to flood the street. (80 nian dai, you zhong jiao zuo qiang xiao ke ka yin de du pin zai da jie xiao xiang da si fan lan.)

Here in the translation process, the features of flood: ferocity, and in great amounts, etc. are reflected on the new drug.

*b) Jane's uncle is an old fox, up to all kinds of evils. (jan de shu shu shi ge lao hu li, shen me huai shi dou gan de chu lai.)*Ji' an Xia ,2000)

In this sentence, characteristics of fox like being cunning, tricky, etc., are reflected on"Jane's uncle".

3.1.2 Replacing the Images of the Source Language with Another from the Target Language

The second translation method might be replacing the images of the source language with another from the target language. With this method, translators can choose this method to use the accepted images in the target language to take the place of the original images in source language.

This can be seen with the help of some examples:

1) There are some color examples reflecting it. It is sometimes hard to translate color words from one language to another without introducing subtle changes in meaning. The English phrase " red-blooded" does not mean " hong xue de", rather, it is another way of saying that someone or their behavior is confident and strong. And the English phrase "red-eyed" just means " having red eyes (for lack of sleep)", while the Chinese equivalent "hong yan" means at least two things: having red eyes, and interesting enough, " green" with envy. In both cases, language expresses cultural reality Yanhong Yu, 2005).

2) Sometimes, if we retain the original vehicle in translation, the target readers cannot easily recognize the implied meaning. In such cases, translators may replace the metaphor with the conventional metaphors in the target language. Thus, the readers of the translated metaphor have no difficulty in understanding. And, such translation can make the target readers have the same association and emotion as the source readers do. For example:

She felt that she must not yield; she must go on leading her straitened, humdrum life. This was her punishment for having made a mistake. She had made her bed, and she must lie on it Wenlan Liu, 2002)

3.1.3 Combining Direct Transference of Images and Annotation

The third effective metaphor translation method in preserving the images in metaphors is a combination of direct transference of images and annotation. Some examples are listed in the following:

a) He was a Machivellian, who would employ all means to attain to power. (ta shi yi ge ma ji ya ji lishi de ren wu, hui yong yi qie shou duan lai jue qu quan li.

b) The waiter said with a voice like butter cake and eye like the cherry in a Manhattan cocktail.(fu wu sheng shuo hua shi sheng yin xiang nai you dan gao yi yang ni wai, yan jing xiang man ha dunji wei jiu zhong de ying tao yi yang hong.(Xia Ji an, 2000).

Annotation is added for the above sentences so as to transfer the meanings contained in the metaphor which can then be better understood by readers in a different cultural back ground.

Actually many other methods for metaphor translation are still to come, with the ultimate aim of preserving the imagery of metaphor while transferring its meanings.

4. A Complete Process of Metaphor Translation

Since the cognition and effective translation methods of metaphor have been discussed in the above, the knowledge of metaphor can then be utilized in the practice of metaphor translation.

One example is given bellow:

"Metabolically, the brain is a pig. It consumes a fifth of the body's oxygen and similarly large portions of its calories and phospholipids. Greedy neutral tissue lying around beyond its point of usefulness is a good candidate for the recycling bin." (Pinker, 1994). The Language Instinct)

Identification of Metaphor

This chunk of language is grammatically right, though a detailed look at it can reveal the violation of logic in that a brain can never be the equal to a pig. Hence, this sentence "Metabolically, the brain is a pig" violates the maxim quality and the maxim of relevance.

Comprehension of Metaphor

Since this metaphor functions for characteristics of "a pig" to "the brain", the adoption of Mapping Theory for comprehending it will be better.

Characteristics of the source domain, "a pig" include: a big eater, greed, and always consuming a large amount of food every day.

As these characteristics are reflected on the target domain "the brain", and the context given in the sentences following the metaphor gives us more specific information, characteristics of "the brain" can be described as being a giant consumer of energy and nutrients among all organs of human beings.

Since the image of "a pig" also exists in Chinese, it can be transferred directly from the source language to the target language, hence the adoption of liberal translation plus some annotation explaining more about its meanings. Thus this sentence can be translated as: *Cong xin chen dai xie de jiao du kan, da nao shi tou zhu, xiao hao da liang de neng liang he yang fen*.

5. Conclusion

Now that metaphor is not a mere rhetoric device but a reflection of certain cultures and modes of thinking representing the essential characteristics of the conceptual system on which people rely to think and act, great changes have taken place in its cognition and translation. This paper depicts a clear picture for metaphor in its broad sense.

By cognizing metaphor in a broad sense, this paper firstly widens people's understanding of metaphor; fully comprehends metaphor from different aspects. In this part, the systematic introduction of metaphor from the five aspects of its different definitions, classification methods, its function, its identification, and its comprehension reveals to readers what a metaphor in this sense means and how to understand metaphor completely.

The paper also emphasizes the importance of image preservation in metaphor translation. In view of the important roles imagery contained in metaphor plays, it is imperative that it be fully transferred from the source language to the target language so as to carry out the task of cross-cultural communication.

The analysis and practical usage of metaphor cognition and translation methods will certainly bring great benefits to the better understanding and reproduction of metaphor in a broad sense. Hopefully readers of this paper can benefit somewhat by the thorough reading and understanding it .

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