

## The Application of Metaphor Theory in English Vocabulary Teaching in Higher Vocational Education

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**Abstract:** Vocabulary teaching is an important basic content of English teaching, whether it is the cultivation of students' English language ability or oral expression ability, it is inseparable from vocabulary teaching. Figurative theory is more a way of thinking, which is an important theoretical basis for people to understand the world and form concepts. Applying metaphor theory to English vocabulary teaching can effectively improve the teaching quality. Vocabulary teaching is an important basic content of English teaching, through the analysis of the important concepts of metaphor theory and the present situation of English vocabulary teaching for students in higher vocational colleges, this paper focuses on the application of metaphor theory in higher vocational English teaching..

### 1. Introduction

In recent years, with the continuous development of higher vocational education, the enrollment scale of higher vocational colleges has gradually expanded, but the quality of students has been declining. Because the comprehensive quality of students in higher vocational schools is relatively low and the cultural foundation is relatively weak, there are many problems in English learning. The students' English level is generally not high, the basic knowledge is relatively poor, the vocabulary storage is insufficient, the reading comprehension ability and the language use ability are on the low side and so on. As a result, most students in higher vocational colleges are not interested in English learning, their enthusiasm is not high, and their English learning ability is generally low. At the same time, in the English teaching of higher vocational colleges today, the teaching method of teachers is still a single tradition. In vocabulary teaching, many teachers simply teach students to read and write words mechanically. In the long run, most students will find it very boring; in reading teaching, they will always explain the meaning of words, translate the meaning of sentences, and analyze the grammar of paragraphs. It can be seen that many problems exist in English teaching in higher vocational colleges due to many reasons. Its key reason is still in teaching, teaching and educating people is a process of teaching and learning, its main body includes teachers and students, the two are interrelated and indispensable. With the birth of Lexus conceptual metaphor theory, metaphor has become an important tool of human cognition. Metaphor is the link connecting cognitive language and plays an important role in English teaching. The introduction of the function of metaphor in higher vocational English can break through the traditional English learning methods, cultivate students' way of thinking, and improve students' ability to understand and express English. Under the guidance of conceptual metaphor theory, this paper studies and discusses English vocabulary teaching in higher vocational colleges.



Figure 1 English test

## 2. Current Situation of English Vocabulary Learning in Higher Vocational Colleges

The motivation of students' English learning in higher vocational colleges is generally not clear, the students in higher vocational colleges have little motivation for English learning, and the consciousness of autonomous learning is also relatively weak. Through the investigation of English teachers, the author finds that more than half of the students think that the purpose of learning English vocabulary is only to complete the teaching task or to pass the CET-4 examination, which has more or less defects in its value orientation. There are a lot of vocabulary problems in English teaching in higher vocational and technical colleges, and vocabulary teaching is a long learning process. Because higher vocational colleges have the characteristics of professional specialization, most students will spend their time on a large number of vocational skills training and activities, so there is little extra time to learn English. Through the investigation of English teaching, the author finds that although most students can realize the importance of English courses, the time to learn English in class is still not enough, and most students can not spend time reading English after class. At the same time, the method of learning English vocabulary is relatively single, so the English level of higher vocational students is generally not high. Vocabulary learning is the foundation and key of English learning, but many higher vocational students' learning of English vocabulary is relatively single and mechanized, which is greatly influenced by the traditional teaching methods of English vocabulary. Many students admit that memorizing words only because they have to cope with the examination and memorize words by rote, which will be forgotten soon after a short memory.



Figure 2 Design of English classroom teaching and practical teaching in higher vocational education

### 3. Concept Metaphor Theory and Higher Vocational English Teaching

With the continuous development of economy and society, China in the 21st century has integrated into the ranks of economic globalization and played a pivotal role in the world stage. As a universal language, English is bound to occupy an important position in Chinese society. The competition between various industries is increasingly fierce, in the economic globalization today, people are also demanding more and more English. But the English of most students in higher vocational colleges is still at a low level, and the vocabulary they master is not enough, and the learning of many words still stays on the surface understanding of vocabulary, ignoring the meaning of vocabulary and its metaphor []. At the same time, dumb English is a common phenomenon in higher vocational colleges, most students have poor ability to use foreign languages, are pure Chinese in foreign language communication, many students' thinking patterns are Chinese, they have been used to thinking and expressing in their own mother tongue. In order to change this phenomenon, we should strengthen the cultivation of students' metaphorical thinking ability, combine conceptual metaphor theory with foreign language English teaching, so that students' foreign language ability can be improved in essence and their comprehensive quality can be improved.



Figure 3 Presentation of open courses in higher vocational English courses

### 4. Application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory in Linguistics

In conceptual metaphor theory, metaphor is mainly manifested as a systematic mapping from one specific conceptual domain to another abstract conceptual domain, which belongs to the mode of thinking and cognitive means, and has a conceptual essence. Because metaphor is essentially a conceptual category, there are many examples of metaphor in human language. Conceptual metaphor theory promotes the development of cognitive semantics in linguistics. There are functional metaphors of conceptual metaphor in people's language and thoughts and behaviors, while in stylistic expression, its use can enhance the effect of stylistic expression, increase the image and interest of linguistic expression, and enhance its appeal. In addition, metaphor also plays a vital role in the connection of the concept of things in the process of language development. People will use rich imagination to find the connection between various new concepts and existing concepts, and the process of searching is the function of metaphor of language. At the same time, the psychological basis of metaphor is the common characteristic of associative things, that is, human beings use the experience of one field to expand to another new field, and thus reflect their own understanding of the world, which means that the change of parts of speech makes some words produce new meaning and function. In addition, derivation also occupies a large proportion of the vocabulary learned in higher vocational English stage. Therefore, in higher vocational English vocabulary teaching, English teachers should actively apply metaphorical thinking ability to teaching in order to cultivate students' imagination and memory ability, and finally reach the purpose of improving vocabulary memory ability.

## **5. Application of Concept Metaphor in English Vocabulary Teaching in Higher Vocational Education**

### **5.1. Application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory in English Polysemy Teaching**

Polysemy phenomenon is a kind of polysemous word phenomenon that is common in human language, which embodies the economic law of human language. By giving more meaning to the same vocabulary, thus reducing the amount of words, it can reduce the burden of people's memory vocabulary. Teachers can guide students to understand the implied meaning of polysemous words in English vocabulary teaching, so as to cultivate their reasoning ability and improve the effect of English teaching. Polysemy means by the known meaning item in a specific context, through understanding the way of cognition and thinking implied in it, to clarify the various connections between polysemous words, so as to infer its unknown meaning, so as to be flexible and skillful in use. The concept of metaphor should be regarded as an important content in the teaching of polysemous words, so that it can become an important means to expand English vocabulary [].

### **5.2. Application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory in English Idioms**

English idioms are the essence of English, which reflects a nation's social customs, values, religious beliefs, history and culture, and even the way of thinking. Its rhetoric is rich, the rhyme is harmonious, the structure is beautiful, gives the person to enjoy with the beautiful art, the vivid image English idiom contains the rich western culture information. Applying conceptual metaphor method to idiom teaching in higher vocational English teaching can not only cultivate students' sense of language and aesthetic ability, but also stimulate students' interest in learning English and improve teaching quality. Because idioms are not only a part of language, they are the product of human conceptual system; most of the meaning of idioms depends on the meaning that constitutes the components of idioms. English idioms have the characteristics of composition, concept, reason and evidence, or their generating mechanism lies in the mapping of conceptual structure, and their learning can not be separated from the thinking of metaphor, while metaphor is the advanced stage of human cognitive development and the cognitive ability necessary for people to understand the world, especially to understand abstract things.

### **5.3. Application of Conceptual Metaphor in English Teaching**

At present, the theory of conceptual metaphor in foreign countries is mainly applied to vocabulary teaching in English teaching. The research focuses on how to improve the metaphorical consciousness ability of foreign language learners, and at the same time actively cultivate and promote foreign language learners to organize and learn the target language vocabulary effectively. However, the study of metaphor in China started late, and the use of metaphorical words in language teaching is mostly concentrated in the stage of college foreign language teaching, mainly to train students to master good vocabulary learning methods and strategies to memorize vocabulary, and at the same time to understand the various cultural meanings contained in English vocabulary.

## **6. Conclusions**

This paper discusses the definition and classification of concept theory and its application in foreign language vocabulary and culture teaching in higher vocational colleges. Foreign language teaching in higher vocational schools should break through the traditional teaching methods, take the characteristics of higher vocational students as the basis, train students' metaphorical thinking ability through metaphor teaching, help students master vocabulary, enrich vocabulary, explore the cultural connotation behind language phenomena, strengthen and improve the ability of cross-cultural communication, and truly make use of learning.

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