The Use of Metaphor in English Language and Literature and Its Impact on Language Cognition

Benzeng Yang

College of Humanities, Liaoning Communication University, Shenyang, 110136, Liaoning, China

Abstract: This article aims to explore the characteristics and types of metaphor in English language and literature, and the influence of metaphor on language cognition. This article first defines the concept and classification of metaphor, then traces the historical evolution of metaphor use in English literature, and discusses the characteristics and development trend of metaphor use in modern English literature. It is found that metaphor plays a vital role in English literary works, which not only enriches language expression, but also promotes the development of language cognition. Through the analysis of the use of metaphor, this study reveals the positive role of metaphor in concept formation, thinking development, language understanding and creation. Therefore, it is concluded that metaphor plays an important role in English language and literature and has a positive impact on language cognition. Future research can further explore the differences in the use of metaphors in different cultural backgrounds and their cognitive effects.

1. Introduction

English language and literature, as an important part of world literature, has a long history and rich works, which have a far-reaching impact on global culture. English literature is not only the art of language, but also the carrier of human thoughts and emotions, which reflects the changes in society, history and culture [1]. Metaphor, as a common rhetorical device in English language and literature, is self-evident. Metaphor makes the original abstract or unfamiliar concept vivid, concrete and easy to understand by implicitly comparing one concept or thing with another [2]. This rhetorical way not only enriches the expression of English language and literature, but also provides readers with a richer reading experience.

Studying the use of metaphor in English language and literature is of great significance for understanding the deep meaning of English literary works and grasping the writer's creative intention [3]. At the same time, metaphor, as a cognitive tool, has a far-reaching impact on people's language cognition. Metaphor can help people better understand and express abstract concepts, and promote the development of thinking and language innovation [4]. Therefore, discussing the use of metaphor in English language and literature and its influence on language cognition will not only help us to understand English literature better, but also help us to better understand human thinking and language cognition process. The main purpose of this study is to explore the characteristics and types of metaphor used in English language and literature, and the influence of metaphor on language cognition.

2. Characteristics and types of metaphor use

2.1. Definition and classification of metaphor

Metaphor is a rhetorical device, which uses the name or description of one thing for another, thus implying the similarity or correlation between them, so as to achieve a vivid, vivid or profound expression effect [5]. The core of metaphor lies in the creation of "similarity", which can be intuitive and emotional, or abstract and conceptual.

Metaphors can be classified into various types according to different standards and angles. In

English language and literature, the common types of metaphors are shown in Table 1:

Table 1 Classification of metaphors in English language and literature

Metaphor type	definition	example
Structural metaphor	The structure of one concept or domain is systematically used in another concept or domain.	"Life is a journey"
Orientation metaphor	Use the concept of spatial orientation to describe other non-spatial concepts	"High spirits"
Ontological metaphor	Materialize abstract concepts or processes.	"Love is blind"
Metonymy	To refer to another related thing or concept by its name.	"White House" (referring to the US government)
Metonymy	Use the name or description of one thing to refer to another different thing or concept, and associate it through similarity.	"Iron fist" (describing a tough policy or means)
Synecdoche	Replace the whole with parts or the whole with parts.	"Washington" (referring to the American government or American politics)

2.2. The historical evolution of metaphor use

The use of metaphor in English language and literature can be traced back to ancient times, and its historical evolution reflects the changes of people's ideas, aesthetic tastes and cultural background in different historical periods.

In the Middle Ages, metaphor was often used in religious and theological expressions to convey mysterious and transcendental ideas. For example, in the Bible, God is metaphorically referred to as "shepherd" and "light" to express his loving and guiding attributes.

In the Renaissance, with the rise of humanism, metaphor began to be more used to describe human nature, emotion and nature. Shakespeare and other literary giants use metaphors extensively in their works, which show the complexity and diversity of human nature through vivid and vivid descriptions.

Since modern times, with the progress of science and technology and the changes of social culture, the use of metaphor has also shown new characteristics and changes. On the one hand, metaphor is more widely used in various fields, including politics, economy and culture. On the other hand, the forms and techniques of metaphor are more diverse and complex, such as symbols, hints and fables.

2.3. Modern characteristics of metaphor use

In modern English literature, the use of metaphor is more diversified and innovative. Writers are no longer satisfied with traditional metaphorical techniques and forms, but try to express their thoughts and feelings through new techniques and forms. For example, some absurd and bizarre metaphors often appear in modernist literary works to express criticism and reflection on social reality.

In modern society, people's emotional expression and personalized needs are getting stronger and stronger, which is also reflected in English literary works [6]. Writers convey their emotions and personalities through metaphors, making their works more appealing and attractive. For example, in modern poetry, metaphor is often used to describe personal emotional experience and inner world. With the deepening of globalization, the communication and integration between different cultures are becoming more and more frequent. In English literary works, writers began to try to introduce metaphorical elements from other cultures into their own works, so as to enrich the cultural connotation and expressive force of their works. This cross-cultural communication and integration not only promotes the understanding and respect between different cultures, but also promotes the innovation and development of English literature.

3. The influence of metaphor on language cognition

3.1. Metaphor and cognitive process

Metaphor plays a vital role in the cognitive process. Metaphor helps people to establish new contact and cognitive framework by mapping concepts or experiences from one field to another [7]. This cross-domain mapping not only enriches people's cognitive experience, but also promotes the formation and expansion of concepts. For example, when describing "life is a journey", metaphor links two seemingly unrelated concepts "life" and "journey", enabling people to understand and explain the meaning and value of life from the perspective of journey. Metaphor also promotes the development and deepening of thinking by creating new language symbols and expressions. Metaphorical language is often enlightening and innovative, which can stimulate people's imagination and creativity, thus promoting the progress and development of thinking. For example, in literary works, writers often use metaphors to create unique images and atmosphere, making their works more appealing and expressive.

3.2. Metaphor and language understanding

Metaphors can help readers understand abstract concepts and complex situations. Due to the cross domain mapping nature of metaphor, it can concretize and visualize abstract concepts or complex situations, making it easier for readers to understand and grasp. For example, when describing "time is a river", metaphors link the abstract concept of "time" with the concrete image of "river", allowing readers to have a more intuitive understanding of the passage and irreversibility of time [8]. Meanwhile, metaphors can also enhance language comprehension and expressiveness. Through the use of metaphors, language can convey more information and emotions, making expression more vivid, vivid, and powerful. This enhanced understanding and expressive effect not only helps readers better understand and grasp the content of the text, but also helps the author better convey their thoughts and emotions.

3.3. Metaphor and language creation

Metaphor provides rich material and inspiration for language creation. Through the use of metaphor, people can create new words, phrases and expressions, making the language more colorful. This creative use not only contributes to the renewal and development of language, but also contributes to the inheritance and innovation of culture. Metaphor can also stimulate the creativity and diversity of language expression. Metaphorical language is often novel and unique, which can break the traditional language norms and thinking patterns, thus promoting the innovation and diversification of language expression. For example, in advertisements, metaphors are often used to create unique brand images and slogans to attract consumers' attention and interest.

4. Cases of metaphor use in English Language and Literature

4.1. Metaphor analysis in literary works

In English literary works, metaphors are used in a colorful and original way. In order to deeply understand the characteristics and effects of metaphor in literary works, this article selects several representative works for metaphor analysis, as shown in Table 2:

Table 2 Metaphors in English literary works

Title of the work	Author	Metaphor type	Metaphorical example	Metaphor analysis
Hamlet	William Shakespeare	Inner struggle	To be or not to be, that is the question worth considering.	This metaphor reveals Hamlet's inner struggle for revenge and his thinking about life through the contrast between life and death.
The Great	F. S.	social status	All great novels begin with	Gatsby's dream symbolizes the

Gatsby	Fitzgerald		a dream, in the corner of reality, a young man is fascinated by something, captivated by a light that he has never seen before, but has been flickering before his eyes.	American dream, while the contrast between reality and dream is a metaphor for the inequality of social class and the hardships of individuals in pursuing their dreams.
Pride and Prejudice	Jane Austen	Love concept	Pride prevents others from loving me, and prejudice prevents me from loving others.	Through the words "arrogance" and "prejudice", this metaphor profoundly reveals the different understandings and prejudices of the characters in the works about love, and how these prejudices affect their relationship.
A Hundred Years of Solitude	Gabriel Garcia Marquez	Loneliness and fate	It is destined that everyone will experience a long period of loneliness in a hundred years.	Through the expression of "one hundred years of loneliness", this metaphor implies that the fate of the Buendia family and its members is doomed to be lonely and repetitive, and also reflects the historical changes of Latin American society and the sufferings of the people.
The Kite Runner	Khaled Hosseini	Friendship and redemption	For you, a thousand times over.	As a metaphor, this sentence reflects the hero's deep feelings for friendship and all his efforts to redeem past mistakes.

Through in-depth analysis of metaphors in these works, we can better understand the theme and intention of the works, as well as the unique charm and significance of metaphors in literary works

4.2. Metaphor use in real life

Metaphor is also widely used in real life. Metaphor is often used to convey information, express opinions and emotions in advertisements, speeches, social media and other occasions. For example, in advertising, metaphor is used to create a unique brand image and slogan to attract consumers' attention and interest; In speech, metaphor is used to enhance the persuasiveness and appeal of the speech, making it easier for the audience to accept and understand the content of the speech; In social media, metaphor is used to express emotions and opinions, and to enhance the dissemination and influence of information. By analyzing the use of metaphor in these situations, we can better understand the role and influence of metaphor in real life and how it affects people's language cognition and behavior.

5. Conclusions

After in-depth exploration and analysis of metaphor in English language and literature, this article holds that metaphor plays an irreplaceable role in English language and literature. It is not only an important means of literary expression, but also a sharp weapon used by writers to reveal deep meaning, shape characters and create a unique atmosphere. At the same time, it is found through research that metaphor can promote the formation of concepts and the development of thinking. By mapping knowledge and experience in different fields across domains, metaphor helps people to establish a new connection and cognitive framework, thus promoting the deepening and expansion of cognition. In addition, metaphor can also enhance the comprehension and expressiveness of language, making it more vivid, vivid and powerful. This effect of enhancing comprehension and expressiveness not only helps readers to better understand and grasp the content of the text, but also helps the author to better convey his thoughts and emotions. By skillfully using metaphor, writers not only enrich literary expression, but also promote the innovation and

development of literature.

References

[1] Tang Liping. English metaphor translation strategies from the perspective of cross-cultural communication [J]. Campus English, 2023(35):187-189.

[2] Wang Zhanpeng. Country and regional studies and the expansion of the subject identity of English language and literature [J]. Foreign Language Teaching and Research, 2023, 55(2):297-307.

[3] Dong Xiaomeng. The effective use of situational teaching method in English language and literature teaching [J]. Educational Modernization, 2018, v.5(12):228-229.

[4] Li Jialu. Discussion on tea culture in English language and literature works [J]. Fujian Tea, 2022, 44(1):175-177.

[5] Lin Ye. Explore the relationship between cross-cultural communication and English language and literature [J]. Wencun Reading, 2023(15):70-72.

[6] Liu Xingyun. Translation strategies of fuzzy semantics in English language and literature [J]. Campus English, 2022(43):190-192.

[7] Hu Jing. Study on Translation Strategies of Vague Semantics in English Language and Literature [J]. Writers' World, 2022(31):150-152.

[8] Hu Jing. On the translator's subjectivity in the translation of English language and literary works [J]. Writers' World, 2022(23):123-125.