

Application of Cognitive Linguistics in the Teaching of Japanese Idioms

Rui Zhang

Lingnan Normal University, Zhanjiang 524048, Guangdong, China.

Fund Project: The phased results of the 2020 school-level teaching reform project of Lingnan Normal University “Innovative and Applied Foreign Language Talent Training Model Reform and Practice”; 2019 Guangdong Higher Education Teaching Reform Project Achievements of “Exploring Research on the Hierarchical and Grouping Teaching Model of Basic Japanese Course Based on ‘Internet + ’”; the phased results of the 2020 school-level education and teaching reform project of Lingnan Normal University “the reform and practice of the training model of innovative and applied foreign language talents”; the phased results of the 2019 school-level quality engineering project of Lingnan Normal University “Basic Japanese II” Stage Results.

Abstract : The teaching of idioms is an important part of Japanese teaching. However, many students are fettered by traditional learning methods and learning thinking. They believe that idioms can only be acquired by rote memorization. Incomplete understanding and learning results in low learning efficiency, and some students even avoid learning idioms. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, this article explores the teaching application of Japanese idioms and provides new ideas for idiom learning.

Keywords : Cognitive Linguistics; Japanese Idioms; Teaching Application

The learning of Japanese idioms is one of the basic components of Japanese learning, but with the deepening of Japanese learning, Japanese vocabulary learning has become difficult, not to mention the learning of idioms. For students, there are no rules to follow. Learning and memory are more difficult. Cognitive linguistics is one of the important learning theories. By applying it in Japanese idioms, finding the rules of idioms from it, simplifying the learning of idioms and making the teaching of idioms more systematic and clear.

1. The current situation of Japanese idioms teaching

Japanese idioms are an important part of Japanese vocabulary, but it is difficult for students to master Japanese vocabulary. It is difficult to understand in many places. For idioms, it is even more difficult to understand and master. Over time, whether it is teaching or learning. There are cases of avoiding the use of idioms. In teaching, since teachers cannot clearly state the rules of idiom memory, they can only attribute idioms to idioms, so there are no rules to follow, and students can only be required to memorize them by rote. Or focus on teaching grammar and reading comprehension, avoiding the teaching of idioms intentionally or unconsciously. Even if some teachers explain idioms, most of them use traditional methods, refer to the meaning of the dictionary, and translate the idioms. However, because students do not have a good grasp of idioms, they also adopt an evasive attitude toward idioms, such as using other expressions to replace parts of idioms, or using simple vocabulary to express similar meanings to idioms. Although students can roughly express the meaning they want to express, there are certain differences in the authenticity of language use, as well as the conciseness and precision of language use, as compared with the authentic idioms, although they affects communication, but it also lacks the humanity and cultural interest when communicating.

2. Cognitive linguistics

Cognitive linguistics believes that people’s cognitive activities produce language, so language is limited by people’s cognition, that is, our perception of the world is summarized and the methods summarized are used as the basis of language research. In fact,

Copyright © 2021 Rui Zhang

doi: 10.18686/ahe.v5i2.3378

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

cognitive linguistics explores the relationship between cognition and language, and the relationship between experience and language that people get through cognition.

3. Cognitive linguistics and Japanese teaching

With the in-depth study of cognitive linguistics, it has also been discovered that cognitive linguistics plays an important role in learning, especially in foreign language learning. For example, when learning Japanese in the past, I used to think that Japanese learning and Japanese language rules had no good learning methods, so I could only learn by rote memorization, but cognitive linguistics lowered the barriers to language learning. Teaching and learning provide new ideas. Connect Japanese learning and cognition, think from a cognitive perspective, use cognitive linguistics methods, disassemble the deep meaning of Japanese vocabulary, study vocabulary meaning and internal laws, so as to help people change the learning mode and change Japanese. The learning of Japanese language is transformed into language cognitive activities to simplify vocabulary, so that people can better understand and learn Japanese idioms, and get rid of the inefficient rote learning method of Japanese.

4. Application of cognitive linguistics in the teaching of Japanese idioms

4.1 Thinking about the source of idioms

Idioms are mainly created and expanded by the Japanese people in their daily life practice, using the most brief vocabulary to express the meaning of specific things in life among them, most of the idioms used in human body parts.

4.2 Research direction of cognitive linguistics

One of the important research directions of cognitive linguistics is metaphor and metonymy. Compared with simile and simile, metaphor uses a word or phrase as a metaphor for another object to reveal the similar relationship between the two, but it does not directly point it out. It is mainly indicated by suggestion and is mainly based on the similarity between the two genders, such as the similarity of the head of river and the tail of river. Metonymy starts from the correlation between the two, such as chronological relationship, causal relationship, coexistence relationship, etc., such as the use of soldiers to refer to weapons, or even soldiers, so metonymy is based on the cognition of the connection of things. On the surface, these two represent a kind of rhetoric, but they also express a way of thinking in language.

4.3 The meaning of “head” in Japanese

The definition of “head” in Japanese includes the following. The most common ones are human heads and animal heads, which is also “head”, or the part above the neck, which can be called head. In addition, the head of a thing or event refers to the upper part of a thing, or the tip or front end of a thing or event. The head is extended again, and it has the meaning of mind and way of thinking. It can also refer to the number, like the number of people. Or at the very beginning of the sequence, it is the leader, the boss.

4.4 Semantic analysis of metaphor and metonymy

Using metaphor and metonymy, the meaning of “head” is sorted out and deduced. The part above the head and neck is the most basic meaning of the head, and the other meanings are extended meanings on this basis.

Metaphor mainly refers to similarity, so metaphor includes similarity in position, such as “top” and “upper”. The head is the upper part of a human or animal body, and “chief leader” and “boss” refer to people with high social status and standing on top, so they also belong to the category of metaphor.

Metonymy refers to the correlation between the two. For example, the head is an important part of the human body, so the “head” is used to represent the number of people or animals, and the statistics are used to describe the part instead of the whole. The head contains the brain, and the brain is an important thinking organ of the human body. We need to use the brain to think and analyze problems. Therefore, the head is used to express the “head” and “brain”, expressing the relationship between the whole and the part, which belongs to the category of metonymy.

4.5 Summary of the semantic law of “head”

The part above the head and the neck is the basic meaning, and the other meanings are derived from metaphors and metonymy. Therefore, the semantic expansion method of “head” in Japanese starts from the neck and gradually extends to the lofty social status, the spatial position innuendo, and the human body, function, unit of measurement, etc.

4.6 Analysis of Japanese idioms for “head”

“头がいい” is understood literally, which means that the head is very good, that is, it means that the head is very good, and

then a derivative understanding means that the person has a good head, a smart head, and a clever. At this time, the head does not mean the upper part of the human body, but refers to the thinking ability and brain of a person, and belongs to the category of spirit, not the human body. From a relational point of view, since the ability to think belongs to one of all abilities of people, that is, the relation between part and whole, it belongs to the part of metonymy.

“頭が痛い” literally means that the head hurts. Why headaches, what causes headaches, that is, what is bothering people, Japanese idioms mean trouble. Here, headache is a kind of body reaction, and now it is similar to trouble, so it uses a metaphorical technique.

“頭にくる”, the meaning of entering the mind, what does it mean to enter the mind? By derivation, it should refer to the blood flowing into the brain, which is commonly called upper head in Chinese, but here is not the meaning of upper head in Chinese, but blood flows into the brain, and the blood surges upwards, that is, when you are angry, you feel blood. It all rushes to the head, which means to be angry. The reason is that blood rushes up and flows into the brain, and as a result, people have an angry feeling. This causal relationship shows metonymy.

“頭を上げる” is compared with “頭を下げる”. On the surface, the former refers to raising the head while the latter refers to the head being lowered. However, what conditions can make people raise their heads and what situations can make people lower their heads. For example, when a new power raises its head, it means that the power is stretched out, and when the head is lowered, it is often a state of surrendering to another person, admitting defeat, or bowing because of admiration or admiration. Both of these are the use of metonymy to derive the original meaning to get the true meaning of the idiom.

5. Conclusion

Japanese idioms are a difficult point in Japanese vocabulary, but Japanese vocabulary is also an important part of Japanese learning. On the surface, Japanese learning and teaching are irregular, but through in-depth analysis of cognitive linguistics tools, the meaning of idioms can be gradually derived law. Therefore, in teaching, teachers should gradually get rid of the traditional rote language teaching mode, and use cognitive linguistics to analyze and summarize the rules of idioms, through the comparison of Chinese and Japanese cultures, literal translation and free translation. Help students to consciously analyze and memorize vocabulary, so as to help students solidify the foundation of Japanese learning. Through the learning of idioms, students can learn from other things and gradually master the ideas and methods of Japanese learning, so as to really help students improve their Japanese level.

References

1. Liu L, Wu Q. The application of cognitive linguistics in the teaching of Japanese idioms——Taking “death” related idioms as examples. *Modern Communication* 2020; (19): 200-202.
2. He P. A comparative study of Chinese and Japanese color word idioms from the cognitive perspective——Taking “red” as an example. *Chinese Character Culture* 2019; (22): 6-7.
3. Liu L, Yang Z. Research on Japanese idioms teaching strategies under the guidance of cognitive theory——Taking “eye” type idioms as an example. *Heilongjiang Education (Theory and Practice)* 2019; (11): 84- 85.