

Research Advances in Deliberate Metaphor Theory

Hui Li

Shanxi Normal University, Taiyuan 030031, Shanxi, China

Abstract: Deliberate metaphor theory(DMT) is an emerging theory. This paper reviews the current status of research on DMT, including theoretical and applied research. Although the research in this field has obtained some achievements, it started late and its history developed briefly. It suggests that the future development trend should be studied from a broader perspective. The emphasis on the choice of multiple discourses will help pave the way for subsequent related research.

Keywords: Deliberate Metaphor; Research Status

1. Introduction

DMT was proposed and developed by Steen, which is defined as “the deliberate use of a metaphor by a metaphor producer to influence the recipient to adopt the same perspective according to cross-domain mapping”.^[1] DMT focuses on the communicative dimension of metaphors. At present, there are fewer extensive related studies on DMT. This paper analyzes and investigates research of current state of DMT. It summarizes the shortcomings of the previous studies and then prospects for the future research of DMT.

2. Dynamics of metaphor research

2.1 Traditional metaphor research

The study of metaphor began with Aristotle in the West. Many theories have emerged about the production and nature of metaphor, such as Aristotle’s comparative theory, Quintillian’s alternative theory, Richards’ interaction theory and Black’s innovation theory. Traditionally, metaphors are studied as a kind of language, and the use of metaphors can make language more interesting.

2.2 Modern metaphor research

It was not until the 1970s and 1980s that linguists began to consider metaphor as an important way of thinking, rather than an expression. In the 1980s, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson published *The Metaphors We Live By* and introduced the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT).^[2] The study of metaphor began to shift to a cognitive perspective.

Since then, a growing number of scholars, including Fauconnier and Gibbs, have turned their attention to the field of metaphor. In 1997, the American linguist Fauconnier formally proposed the Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) by integrating metaphorical mechanisms with other cognitive phenomena in *Mapping in Thought and Language*.^[3] In 2002, Fauconnier and Turner refined and summarized the Conceptual integration theory (CIT) in *The Way We Think: Conceptual Integration and the Hidden Complexity of the Mind*. CIT is an operational mechanism that reveals the behind-the-scenes cognition hidden behind human thinking abilities.^[4]

With the in-depth study of modern metaphor theory, scholars have supplemented CMT. Both CMT and CIT consider that metaphor is not simply a common linguistic phenomenon, but a cognitive phenomenon or cognitive device, which largely escapes the limitation of the traditional perspective.

2.3 Deliberate metaphor research

With the continuous development of metaphor research and the intervention of other disciplines such as functional linguistics and discourse analysis, researchers have proposed the conscious nature of metaphor use, that is, the communicative intention and function of metaphor use. In 2015, Steen put forward DMT in *Developing, testing and interpreting DMT*. He emphasizes that metaphor is an intentional tool in communication.^[5] Sun and Chen(2017) pointed out that in the human conceptual system, in addition to the overwhelming majority of unconscious metaphors, deliberate metaphors also occupy a considerable proportion.^[6]

There are two attitudes in academia: those who appreciate it (Beger 2016; Musolff 2016; Xu et al.2016) and those who refute it (Gibbs 2011, 2015; Charteris Black 2012; Ng&Koller 2013; Negrea-busuioc & Ritchie 2015).^[7-12] This has contributed to the development of DMT. Research on DMT has focused on the following aspects:(1)The construction of theory. Steen(2015) thinks that when a metaphor is deliberately used as a metaphor, which can be defined as deliberate metaphor. In *DMT:Basic Assumptions,Key Principles,and Pressing Issues*, Steen first sets forth his basic assumptions about 11 core concepts in verbal metaphor research.^[13] (2) The application of DMT. Beger (2016) has analyzed authentic corpus from university classrooms based on a self-constructed corpus and the results showed that professors used deliberate metaphors to convey complex scientific concepts and they have different functions. (3)The recognition of deliberate metaphor. Reijnierse(2017)in *The Value of Deliberate Metaphors*, proposed DMIP to identify deliberate metaphors.^[14]

The study of DMT in China is late and has obtained some achievements. The current domestic research on DMT is mainly focused on two aspects:(1)The introduction and construction of theory. Sun and Chen first summarized and discussed in detail the current state of research on DMT. They explore the definition, basic conceptual components and theoretical assumptions of deliberate metaphor based on a new three-dimensional model of metaphor. In *A Review of Research on Corporate Branding Metaphors Based on DMT*, Fan (2019) further analyzed and discussed DMT based on interaction subjectivity theory, stating that

both conceptual and deliberate metaphors are based on people's shared knowledge, and both reflect interaction subjectivity at the communicative level. ^[15] Wang(2021) experimentally verified that deliberate metaphors have dual cognitive subjectivity. ^[16] (2)The application of DMT. It can be refined into the following two aspects. On the one hand, the translation of deliberate metaphors is studied by Liang(2019), who investigates the translation of deliberate metaphors in Kenyan railroad news. ^[17] Sun and Wang(2020) summarized four translation techniques of deliberate metaphors based on the analysis of the reciprocal relationship between English and Chinese in lexical concept and cognitive model theory. On the other hand, there is the application of DMT in discourse analysis. ^[18] Applying DMT to discourse analysis can help to analyze the internal structure of discourse. Wu(2019) introduced DMT and demonstrated the specific operation of the three-dimensional metaphor model in political discourse through example analysis in Deliberate Metaphor in Political Discourse.^[19]

3. Conclusion

Both CMT and CIT have largely broken the traditional view of metaphor and provided scholars with a new cognitive perspective to study metaphor in the fields of economics, politics, and philosophy. Conceptual metaphor is a cross-domain mapping between two conceptual systems. Numerous psycholinguistic experiments have demonstrated that conceptual metaphors are unconscious in the process of metaphorical elaboration. However, DMT allows us to revisit the issue of consciousness that CMT ignores. It can be seen that DMT considers metaphor not only as a way of thinking and expression, but more importantly as a communicative device that people use intentionally.

In summary, scholars have not conducted extensive research related to DMT. But DMT has strong explanatory power and relevance to the study of language application. Researchers have tried to study DMT from different perspectives. However, the research content of deliberate metaphor is still focused on the translation of deliberate metaphor and the discourse of political discourse, and there are still many areas that have not yet been covered in other attempts. The research on DMT has yet to be expanded, both in terms of the selection of topics and the deeper meaning of language, and there is much room for research. Future research should investigate DMT from a broader perspective and promote the further development of DMT.

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