A Tale of Two Cities: A Multimodal Analysis of the Figurative Expressions about City in Picture Books

Realizing the significant role that city plays in the development of human civilization, the influence it brings to people's life in the modern society, as well as its absence in fields other than architecture, urban design, and urban planning, this research aims to study the multimodal metaphorical manifestations of civic imagery in picture books from a cognitive linguistic point of view. Relying on the Visual-Verbal Multimodal Metaphor Identification Procedure (VVMMIP) constructed by us through referring to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 2003; Lakoff, 1987, 1993) and Metaphor Identification Procedure:

- Conceptual Metaphor Theory
- Metaphor Identification Procedure
- Visual-Verbal Multimodal Metaphor Identification Procedure
- Imaginative urban panorama — Visual-Mode-Prominent Network
- Verbal-Mode-Prominent Network — Visual-Verbal-Mode-Equivalent Network — Simple Multimodal Metaphor — Complex Multimodal Metaphor
- Magic Surrealism
- Multimodal Metaphorical Scenario Chain Reaction
(Pragglejaz Group, 2007), we make a thorough examination of the 266 data collected from the Taiwanese picture book writer Jimmy Liao’s 32 works. The results unfold that (1) holding a metonymic nature, an urban setting with multimodality may be limned through multimodal networks displaying distinctive focuses upon visual and verbal modes, namely, the Visual-Mode-Prominent Network, the Verbal-Mode-Prominent Network, or the Visual-Verbal-Mode-Equivalent Network. (2) Two types of multimodal metaphor—Simple Multimodal Metaphors and Complex Multimodal Metaphors—are figured out to delineate cityscape, distinguishing each other in the aspects of the degree of reality and the sophistication of metaphorical message. That is, whereas the civic imagery and the figurative implication formed by Simple Multimodal Metaphors tend to be transparent due to its mapping structure between a pair of source and target domains, those of Complex Multimodal Metaphors are rather convoluted by virtue of the fact that they feature a multiple-to-one source and target interrelationship. (3) The individual solitude and the interpersonal alienation lurking in the metaphorical sketch of city are brought to light, revealing the truth that the product of human conceptual system in fact tells much about the collective traumatic experience of metropolitans. (4) Based on the phenomenon that urban imagery in the realm of metaphor is characterized by the harmonious fusion of bizarre and ordinary elements, we propose the civic magic surrealism, which, absorbing the dynamics of multimodal simile and oxymoron, provide a possible path to understand the illogic human subconscious. (5) Finally, the Multimodal Metaphorical Scenario Chain Reaction is suggested to interpret the interconnection between distinctive multimodal figurative presentations of urban imagery, reflecting that a target concept with a metonymic property would allow a diversity of novel multimodal metaphors to take appearance. In a nutshell, this research sheds light upon the remarkable points concerning urban vista under the multimodal metaphor framework and endeavors to make contribution to interdisciplinary studies.