

A Study of English Writing Teaching under the Guidance of Memetics

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Abstract: English writing is a fundamental skill in today's globalized world. Teaching English writing effectively involves understanding not only the grammatical and structural aspects but also the cognitive and sociocultural factors that influence language use. This paper delves into the application of memetics in the domain of English writing teaching. Memetics, a field that explores the transmission and evolution of ideas and behaviours, offers a unique lens to understand the processes underlying the acquisition and development of writing skills. This study aims to examine the potential benefits of integrating memetics into English writing instruction, exploring its implications for enhancing creativity, engagement, and overall proficiency in English writing.

Keywords: memetics, English writing teaching, guidance

1. Introduction

English writing is a fundamental skill in today's globalized world. Teaching English writing effectively involves understanding not only the grammatical and structural aspects but also the cognitive and sociocultural factors that influence language use. Memetics, derived from the evolutionary biology concept of memes, provides a framework to comprehend the dissemination of ideas and behaviors in a sociocultural context. Memetics is a field of study that explores the replication, transmission, and evolution of cultural information, behaviours, and ideas within societies and across generations. The term "meme" was coined by British evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book "The Selfish Gene" to describe a unit of cultural evolution analogous to genes in biological evolution. Just as genes are the units of biological evolution, memes are the units of cultural evolution. A meme can be any idea, behaviour, or cultural artefact that spreads from person to person through imitation, communication, or other forms of transmission. Memes can include language, fashion trends, religious beliefs, catchphrases, rituals, and more. Key concepts within memetics include Replication: Memes replicate and spread through imitation, communication, and other cultural processes. When individuals adopt and share a meme, they are replicating it. Mutation: Like genetic mutations, memes can undergo variations or modifications during transmission. These variations can occur due to imperfect imitation, interpretation, or creativity. Selection: Memes are subject to a form of natural selection, where some memes thrive and spread successfully, while others fade away. Factors like appeal, relevance, and the ability to resonate with individuals influence meme selection. Cultural Evolution: Memes evolve over time through a process similar to natural selection. The successful memes tend to persist and influence culture, while less successful ones may fade away

or undergo further mutations. Memplex: A memplex is a collection of related memes that work together to form a complex cultural idea, belief system, or behaviour. It's analogous to the concept of a gene complex in genetics. Memetics provides a framework for understanding how ideas and cultural phenomena propagate, evolve, and shape human societies. It has applications in fields such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, marketing, and communication, helping to explain how cultural trends and behaviours emerge and spread. This paper explores how the principles of memetics can be applied to enhance English writing instruction.

2. Memetics: A Brief Overview

Memetics is a theoretical framework that explains the spread, evolution, and adoption of ideas, behaviours, or cultural elements within a society. Memes, analogous to genes, are units of cultural information that are transmitted from person to person, subject to replication, variation, and selection. The meme theory originated from *The Selfish Gene* [1], which proposes a unit of cultural transmission, the meme. Some scholars define a meme as a unit of information in memory that can be copied from one person's memory to another's, which is commonly referred to as a virus of the mind (virus of the mind) [2]. The theory borrows a theoretical assumption from Darwinian biological evolution to explain the law of cultural inheritance, and "attempts to interpret the universal connection between things and the law of cultural evolution and inheritance from the perspectives of ephemeral and co-evolution." The core concept of memetics is "modality", which is characterized by "reproduction". The study of memes allows insights into the dynamics of cultural evolution and the factors that shape the dissemination of ideas.

Modalism in foreign countries mainly consists of "an information view", "thought contagion view", "cultural evolution view", and "modal symbols view". Among them, Dennett, a representative of the information view, points out that the modal carrier exists both in the brain and in the object itself, and can be used to be imitated view that broadens Dawkins's definition of modality as existing only with the mind. "Thought Contagion View," "Cultural Evolution View," and "Modal Symbolic View." The mind contagion view is represented by Gatherer, who argues that modalities are cultural units of inheritance or imitation and that each modality should be a directly observable cultural phenomenon. This view deepens the theory of cultural transmission by basing the modality theory on observation and quantification, thus distinguishing it from sociological and social-psychological theories of culture. Gabora, a representative of the evolutionary view of culture, argues that modality is a second mode of evolution beyond genes, which not only explores the evolution of literacy and concepts from a societal perspective, but also explains how representations are produced, stored, organized, and expressed in an individual's brain. The view combines modality with cognitive science in a way that has great practical significance. Deacon, a representative of the modal-symbolic view, states that modality is treated as a symbol or a symbolic vehicle. This viewpoint introduces modality theory into semiotics to help solve the unsolved problems in semiotics and also explains the possibility of combining semiotics and modality theory.

Domestic scholars' research on modality theory mainly focuses on the fields of linguistics, pragmatics, language teaching and translation. Among them, linguistics is the research of scholars who have mainly made new explanations of linguistic phenomena, analyzed multilingual phenomena such as Internet language and foreign words from the angle of modality theory, and provided new discoveries. Li Jie explored the special pragmatic phenomenon of verbal humour caused by variants produced in the process of linguistic modality replication [3]. He Xuelin Meanwhile, scholars have also used modality theory in the process of language communication [4]. Xie Chaoqun and He believe that the process of the modalities competing with each other is the process of language selection and use, which is instructive for successful communication [5]. From the perspective of cross-cultural context, Tang Degen analyzed the discourse meaning of modality, which is mainly reflected in the

value-added meaning of linguistic modality in new contexts [6]. Modality theory provides - a new way of thinking for language research, and it also plays a revealing role in English teaching, for example, Liu Qian the copying process of modality is closely related to writing as the input-output process, and this connection provides a new way of thinking for high school English writing teaching [7]. Su, Miaomiao Linguistic modality theory helps to improve students' writing anxiety, enhance students' confidence and the richness of students' writing chunks [8]. Jin Dan and Wen Xiaolan sorted out the keywords of the research on the modality theory in China [9]:

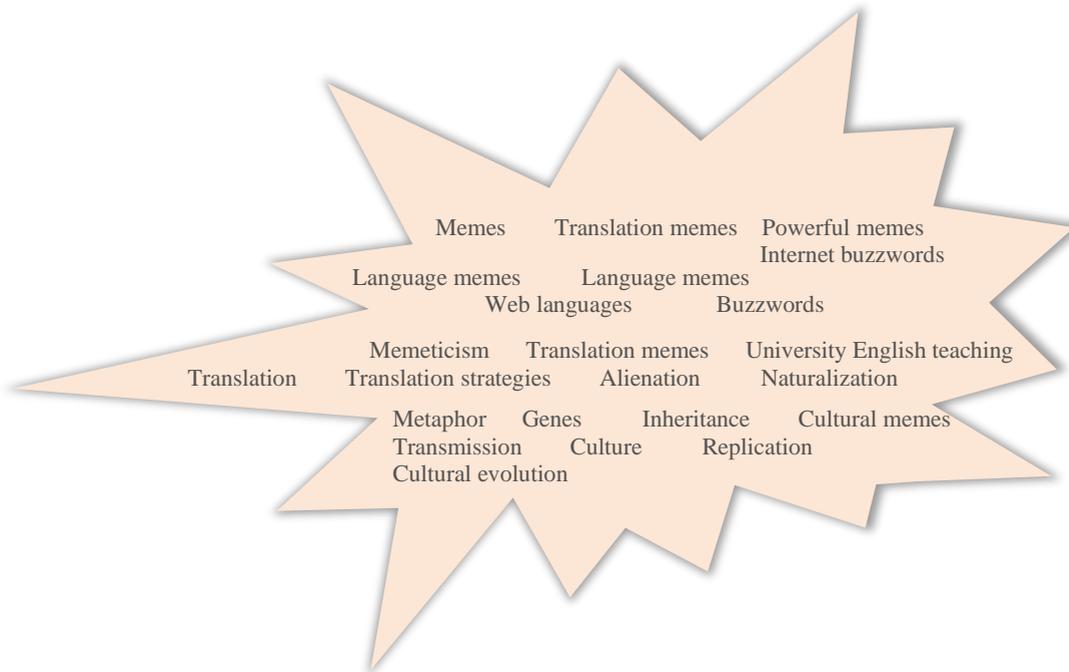


Figure 1: Knowledge map of keyword co-occurrence [9].

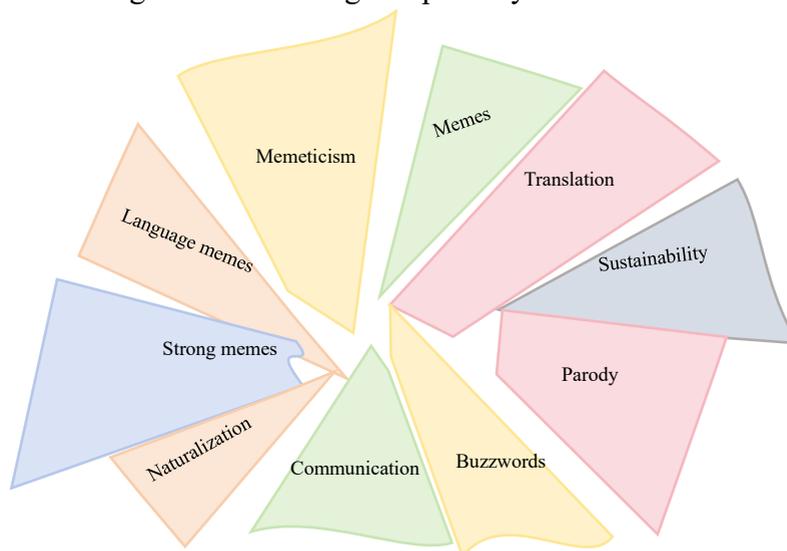


Figure 2: Key clustering Knowledge map [9].

3. Analysis

Applying memetics to language learning involves recognizing language as a meme, a replicable unit

of cultural information. Most students do not realize that language memes are used in their language or that several language memes are used at the same time, which is because students have the nature of imitation in the process of learning, which makes them have the potential awareness of the language memes. In English writing under the guidance of meme theory, students make tacit knowledge explicit in the writing process, such as vocabulary application writing mode, and tacit knowledge can also enhance students' language awareness. Relevant experimental studies also prove that imitation and adaptation can help improve students' overall writing proficiency. Therefore, students' writing scores are higher, and language memes are copied and spread in the process. According to the characteristics of genotype language meme theory, students are allowed to memorize language memes in specific textbooks in the teaching process. When students encounter a similar context to the original language in the writing process, they can reproduce it in a direct way to enhance the expression effect of students' writing. In addition, encouraging students to use synonyms can eliminate word repetition and make the essay more expressive. According to the characteristics of phenotypic meme theory. Homomorphic association means writing in a way that appears in the same form on different occasions. Students can use this way to generate different meaning associations when writing. Meanwhile, connotative meaning or associative meaning will change in the process of language reproduction and transmission.

In the context of English writing teaching, this perspective allows educators to identify the “memes” within the language structure, style, and usage patterns. Understanding how these memes spread and evolve can inform instructional strategies to enhance language acquisition. One of the significant advantages of incorporating memetics into English writing instruction is the potential to enhance creativity. Memetics offers insights into how creative ideas evolve, spread, and adapt. By analyzing successful memes in writing, educators can encourage students to create original, innovative content that is more likely to engage and resonate with readers. Understanding the mechanisms of meme transmission can aid educators in creating relevant and engaging writing materials. By identifying the elements that make certain memes or writing styles popular, teachers can tailor instructional content to captivate students' interest and motivation, thus fostering a deeper engagement with the writing process. Integrating memetics into English writing teaching can revolutionize pedagogical approaches. Teachers can use this framework to design interactive and dynamic lessons that encourage students to critically analyze and create memes in the form of written expressions. Moreover, utilizing memetics may lead to the development of digital tools and platforms that optimize language learning through the lens of meme propagation.

4. Conclusion

The application of memetics in the field of English writing teaching holds significant potential for enhancing creativity, engagement, and overall proficiency. By embracing memetic principles, educators can develop innovative instructional strategies that empower students to navigate the complex landscape of language and communication effectively. Further research and experimentation are necessary to fully understand the extent of memetics' impact on English writing education and to optimize its integration into pedagogical practices.

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