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Case Study of 丝 *si*

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Abstract

With the increasing enrichment on the usage of the linear classifier 丝 *si*, this research explains the mapping of the original concept of *si* with various collocations in different domains based on the metaphor theory. It can be concluded that *si* is initially regarded as a string referring to the shape; its usage is then broadened to modify a small amount, and it is finally used as a slight change to show the degree. In addition, a brief comparison on the usage of 丝 *si* and 线 *xian*, and 缕 *lv* is made. From the diachronic aspect, it can be found that the various applications of linear classifiers to a large extent rely on their semantic features. In the end, according to the analysis, suggestions are put forward in linear classifier teaching.

Key words: linear classifier, 丝 *si*, metaphor

Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Theoretical basis.....	1
3. Research questions and methods.....	2
3.1. Research questions.....	2
3.2. Research methods.....	2
4. The linear classifier <i>si</i> and metaphor.....	3
4.1. Human senses.....	4
4.2. Human activity.....	6
4.3 Others.....	7
5. The diachronic development of the noun <i>si</i>	8
6. The reduplication and the numeral of the classifier <i>si</i>	10
6.1. AA form.....	10
6.2. ABB form.....	10
6.3. ABAB form.....	11
6.4. The numeral of the classifier <i>si</i>	11
7. Other similar classifiers.....	11
7.1. Xian (线).....	11
7.2. Lv (缕).....	12
8. Application in teaching.....	12
9. Conclusion.....	14
References.....	16

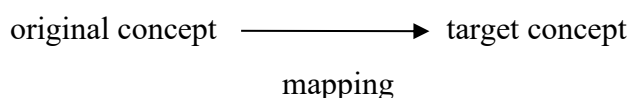
1. Introduction

The enrichment of Chinese classifiers is an important character to distinguish Chinese from other languages. Based on the study of Shao (1993), there are seventeen linear classifiers, and then Wu (1998) made a more detailed classification among these linear classifiers, including the four linear classifiers, *si*(丝), *xian*(线), *lv*(缕), *liu*(绉), seven stripness and six rodness. By observing the areas of uses of the different classifiers, it can be found that their initial specific using areas have been largely extended. For example: the original noun of *si* refers to the concrete silk and when it becomes a qualifier, it can modify human senses 一丝酒气 *yisijiūqi*, and it can also express human emotion 一丝感动 *yisigāndòng*, it can still refer to human behaviour 一丝抗拒 *yisikāngjū* and so on. All the examples show that the usage of *si* is not simply employed in a fixed field, the similar cases like *xian* and *lv*. As far as we are concerned, the motivation of their extension in semantic is due to the metaphor. However, the students whose native languages have deficiencies in classifiers may have great difficulties in learning these words due to the unclear boundaries of their semantic features and the diversity of collocations with noun phrases.

This paper attempts to mainly explain the projection between the original concept (linear classifier *si*) and the target concept (its collocations) based on the metaphor theory, and also make a brief comparison among the usage of *si*, *xian* and *lv* in order to provide some suggestions for linears teaching especially in TCSL.

2. Theoretical basis

Based on Lakoff & Johnson (1980), they regarded metaphor as cognitive methods and mode of thought not only a characteristic of language alone. People always make use of the similarities between the two objects to help them understand the more abstract concept. When we apply one object to help understand the other, the front one is called the original concept and the other is called the target concept. Their relationship performs like this:



Compared with the original concept, the target concept is always stranger and more abstract. As one of the conceptual metaphor example stated in their book “argument

is war” according to this concept, we often produce sentences like this: “I’ve never won an argument with him; He *attacked every weak point* in my argument” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.4). The two sentences reflect that we view the person arguing with us as our opponent, then we need to defeat our opponents by using some strategies just like the action of the two sides in a war. Therefore, the original concept is about the physical battle which is mapping to the verbal battle. In this example, people make use of the original concept ‘War’ to help them structure what they think, what they speak and what they do in terms of argument. Lakoff & Johnson further divided metaphors into three kinds, structural metaphors, orientational metaphors and ontological metaphors. The structural metaphors mean that one concept is constructed by another, such as *argument is war*; the orientational metaphors shows the dependency on the spacial direction to build a new concept such as *I am feeling up* which shows I am happy. In our daily life, people are habitual to think that ‘up’ equals to happy while ‘down’ means depressed, through describing up and down to convey our emotions. Besides the above two kinds of metaphors, people often produce sentence like this: *he is a - head of us*, which means he is a leader of us. We easily use our body parts to construct other similar concepts, which is called ontological metaphor.

3. Research questions and methods

3.1. Research questions

With the above two aims in mind, this research will answer the following questions:

- 1) How to explain the diversity usage of linear classifier of *si* based on the metaphor theory?
- 2) What are the semantic differences among the usage of *si*, *xian* and *lv*?
- 3) How to apply the semantic features of *si* into Chinese linear classifier teaching based on the metaphor analysis?

3.2. Research methods

- 1) To answer the above questions, this research adopts both synchronic and diachronic methods. As we all know that classifiers in Chinese have gone through a long developmental process, and their usage has been changed a lot. The explanation from the diachronic view will present a more clear time line of their development. This research also will rely on the metaphorical theory from

cognitive linguistics to analyse and explain the usage of *si*, *xian*, *lv* in different fields.

2) In this research, the data are collected from two Chinese corpora online: <http://ccl.pku.edu.cn/corpus.asp> and <http://aihanyu.org/cncorpus/cncindex.aspx>.

4. The linear classifier *si* and metaphor

Si is a noun in its original meaning, but in Tang dynasty it is used to be a nominal classifier. It is normal that people use 一丝 *yisi* as an adjunct before a noun phrase, verb phrase and even adjective phrase. But why the *si* can be a classifier to describe these phrases? Or can *si* be replaced with other classifiers, such as 枝 *zhi*, 把 *ba* and even 缕 *lv* and 线 *xian*? Regarding to *si*, it can be a linear shape classifier. Although its original meaning is about a concrete object--the silk, people are more likely to use it to modify and count objects.

Types		Nouns that can co-occur
senses	sight	绿意、烟草、红晕、赘肉、炊烟
	hearing	声息、音响、喧嚣、动静
	touch	清凉、热气、微热、凉意
	smell	香味、气味、清香、酒气
	taste	清甜、咸味、味道
activities	facial expression	微笑、愁容、奸笑、表情
	emotion	痛楚、歉意、孤寂、暖意、温馨
	action	嘲讽、犹豫、赞许、顽皮
others	hope/luck	希望、运气
	romance	浪漫
	change	变化

We suggested a hypothesis that *si* can not only describe most of human's five senses perceived by sensory organs, but also the facial expression, emotion, action in human activity. In addition, *si* is used to qualify others, especially abstract things,

such as hope or luck, romance and change.

From the above table, we observe that *si* is a such productive and flexible classifier. In modern Chinese, *si* remains the basic semantic features -- thin, long and light. This paper will have a further analysis in the following examples.

4.1. Human senses

The first one is the five senses. They are physical abilities of human's organs, such as sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. As we all know, objects in the world can be observed by eyes through the light. And the sight exists in the form of line and it can be reshaped by its media. 红晕 *hongyun* turns up on one's plain face, we consider plain is the original background color, when the red color turns up, it looks apparent but the degree is not immense. In this case, we use *Si* to modify such kind of state. 烟草 *yancao* is a kind of grass. Thus, 烟草 *yancao* has the linear feature of grass and it also contains the meaning of little and thin. As for 赘肉 *zhuiou*, it seems there is no connection between *si* and the body fat, in fact, we can see in paintings that people use curve to show the body fat when they want to express an overweight man. In this case, the body fat is also related to the linear characteristic of *si*.

(1) 苍白色的脸上，似乎露出一丝红晕。(罗广斌《红岩》)

A glimmer of flush

(2) 他张着嘴巴，突起的下唇上挂着一丝烟草。(马里奥·巴尔加斯·略萨《城市与狗》)

A trace of tobacco

(3) 虽然他已经人到中年，但是身上没有一丝赘肉。

A glimmer of fat

Sound as a signal perceived by one of our major senses, it is not visible for human. But we can hear and feel it through virtually physical phenomenon, such as the movement in the nature -- rain and earthquake. All of this phenomenon can be seen by eyes and more importantly, when the power of the movement is small and soft, then the sound is likely to be as small as the silk. So in this state, both 声息 *shengxi* and 音响 *yinxiang* meet the small and weak feature of *si* in the context, then we enable to use the linear classifier *si* to measure them.

(4) 这功夫，天气已经过了半夜，全村都是黑黝黝的，沉静得一丝声息都没有。(刘流《烈火金钢》) A glimmer of sound

(5) 这个时候，狂呼了一夜的风，早都累乏了，只剩微弱弱的一点劲儿，偶而在人的耳边上发出一丝音响，大雪也停了，有几颗星星从头顶的云缝里钻出来(刘亚舟《男婚女嫁》)

A glimmer of audio

As for the sense of touch, 清凉 *qingliang*, 热气 *requi* belong to this aspect. They are also related to temperature in physics. Human feels the heat and cold flow by nociceptor, which is in our skin. In the context, 清凉 *qingliang* and 热气 *requi* comparing to strong wind, both of them emphasize the small amount of the coolness and heat of air respectively, so they have to choose a classifier which is consistent with the feature: a small amount. Here, *Si* meets the requirement of ‘small’ in amount.

(6) 在京城悄然兴起的“品尝销售”给炎炎的夏日注入了一丝清凉。(《1994 年报刊精选》) A glimmer of coolness

(7) 浑身上下冰冷彻骨，悟不出一丝热气。(陈世旭《将军镇》)

A glimmer of heat

Smell and taste are also senses we cannot see by eyes. If we want to describe them and even measure the degree of smell and taste, we tend to make it more concrete to be countable. *Si* is able to be the classifier as its semantic feature-- light and small.

(8) 凑近看时，能够隐约闻到一丝香味，妈妈说那是因为在鼠药里点了香油。(《人民日报》1998) A glimmer of flavour

(9) 眼前的三姐也没一丝酒气，三姐怎么会这副模样呢？又怎么会是独自归家的呢？谁送三姐来到这里？三姐去谁家赴宴？(《作家文摘》1993) A glimmer of alcohol

(10) 苏莘依偎在乃文的怀里，吃着她买给她的小甜点，脸上始终带着一丝甜意。(于晴《红苹果之恋》) A glimmer of sweetness

(11) 感到大势已去的邵炜刚此时终于品到了酽茶中的一丝苦涩。(《2000 年人民日报》) A glimmer of bitterness

The above five traditional senses are perceived by human's organ. To be more specific, it is the nerve that perceives these various senses. In biology, we know that nerves are formed by countless fibres, which carry information between body and the brain. So in terms of the shape of these sensory organs, it is reasonable to infer that all kinds of senses are perceived by linear fibres or threads, which are similar to the linear shape of silk in our cognition.

On the other hand, the sight, sound are spread in the form of waves and taste and touch are perceived by molecule. In addition, waves have different frequency in different environment so that people feel these senses intermittently but not continuously though we cannot feel apparently. In the context of *si*, we can infer that the light, sound, taste and feel are all weak. Since physical energy are weak, they are more likely to be produced in a linear form. Hence, there is an agreement between the classifier *si* and the following target.

In brief, when *si* describes human senses, concepts of *si* and senses interact mutually. Regarding the semantic feature of *si* is thin, long and light, we conclude that the collocation with *si* is metaphorized into string-shape and small amount. We consider them to be structural metaphors. Lakoff also suggested that concept metaphor is the most important attributes in metaphor theory. To be more detailed, senses can obtain new meanings and implications by the semantic feature of *si*. But it does not mean that their original and basic characteristics disappear in the context, they just hide backward in order to highlight the new feature.

4.2.Human activity

Si can modify facial expressions, such as 奸笑 *jianxiao*. It can also describe human action such as 嘲讽 *chaofeng*, 犹豫 *youyu* and emotion like 痛楚 *tongchu*, 暖意 *nuanyi*. Moreover, *si* is used to qualify the other abstract concepts, such as 运气 *yunqi*, 变化 *bianhua*, 浪漫 *langman*. In the cognitive linguistics theory, we define this way to be an ontological or physical metaphor. Lakoff proposed that ontological metaphor is a way to classify and qualify the abstract concepts and make them easier to be talked about. It is a way of thinking and cognition and people is good at changing things to be concrete and visible.

- (12) 此时的杜月笙正在他的房间里，为自己的“杰作”而沾沾自喜，听到蔡妈的一声呼叫，顿时怒火上升，刚想发作，瞬即又克制住了，随即嘴角边又撇出一丝奸笑。（《蒋氏家族全传》）
- (13) 薛传薪听罢脸上现了一丝嘲讽道：暖暖，你可不能把这些破事都往赏心苑头上安，第一，我们不承认她来赏心苑给游客按摩过。（周大新《湖光山色》） A glimmer of sarcasm
- (14) 起轩的心被巨大的痛楚狠抽了一下，当下，他没有一丝犹豫，转身就往韩家奔去。（琼瑶《鬼丈夫》） A glimmer of hesitation
- (15) 陈伟玲脸上掠过一丝痛楚，“我没什么权利指责你，指责她”。（王朔） A glimmer of pain
- (16) 上车后，司机的一句“您好”为我带来一丝暖意。（《1998年人民日报》） A glimmer of warmth

4.3 Others

In the above table, there are some collocations that *si* is used to modify. In the paper, we consider three types such as hope or luck, romance and change. As for hope or luck and change, both of them are qualified by *Si* in terms of small amount. In the context, they are abstract nouns which express slightly contrast comparing to the preceding phenomenon. In (17), a glimmer of luck is in contrast to full of risk; in (18), 希望 *xiwang* ‘hope’ is compared with despair. But in (19) we cannot find other nouns comparing with 变化 *bianhua* ‘change’. Actually, change is related to a more active process, there must be something new happens. Such new phenomenon exists from nothing, which also reveals a small change in amount. Furthermore, romance is a unique noun but in (20) is more likely to be an adjective modifying the name of bridge. Since romance is nominalized by its adjective. So 浪漫 *langman* ‘romance’ carries the property of degree of romantic. 浪漫 *langman* is gradable so there is a need to qualify the degree and thus, *si* functions as a classifier of small degree.

- (17) 将军出征，从来就是风险十分，是不能靠一丝运气的。（《1995年人民日报》） A glimmer of luck
- (18) 印尼华侨傅孙权，身患肝癌和糖尿病，绝望之中他怀着最后一丝希望找到了吴孟超。 A glimmer of hope

(19) 雪瑛呆呆地听着，脸上没有一丝变化，心里却浪头般翻滚起来，她不再说话，挥挥手示意胡管家退下了。（《乔家大院》） A glimmer of change

(20) 每一处题字都有它的特殊性，实用和装饰美兼而有之才好，桥是行人来往必经之地，桥之命名也是为的方便行人，我想，首先字体应该规范化，让人人认得，不可杜撰，字要端庄清楚，大街不是美术馆展厅，一丝浪漫要不得。（《1993年人民日报》）

A glimmer of romance

All the examples show that there is a clear path of metaphorization of *si*. When *si* collocates with different types of phrases, either concrete or abstract, *si* enables to modify them in three main domains: shape, amount and degree. Because of the original semantic features of *si*: thin, long and light, the target concept becomes more specific: a string like shape, a small amount and a slight change in degree.

5. The diachronic development of the noun *si*

Si has two basic meanings. One is the original meaning that is silk, a substance that is made into smooth fine cloth and sewing thread, and the other one is the extended meaning which refers to string instruments of ancient China in general.

Before Tang Dynasty, these two basic meanings of *si* are mainly used in the written works. When it comes to Tang Dynasty, Tang poem used many metaphoric meanings of *si*, of which the targets are always the concrete entities like willow, hair or rain. During Song Dynasty, *si* started to be used to describe the abstract thing like emotion, which is in a small amount, restricted to the literary work. In Yuan and Ming Dynasty, the metaphoric meaning of *si* was gradually used in the oral conversation which can be seen in some light literature. This metaphoric usage is still used widely nowadays.

Meanwhile, in Tang Dynasty, *si* started to be used as a classifier with its metaphoric meaning, adding the numeral like 一 *yi*, 千 *qian*, 万 *wan* in front of it. *Si* using as classifier was not in a great amount, but it was not constrained in the concrete things but abstract things like color. In the early republican period, *si* is used in some set phrases as a classifier like 一丝不苟 *yisibugou*, 一丝不乱 *yisibuluan*, etc.

Nowadays, as a noun, *si* is used as its original meaning and extended meaning in

minority, like 丝绸 *sichou*, 蚕丝 *cansi*, 丝竹 *sizhu*, while it is used as its metaphoric meaning more like 铁丝 *tiesi*, 情丝 *qingsi*, 发丝 *fasi*. However, as a classifier, *si* is used extensively to describe senses, facial expressions, emotions and action, and so on.

(21) Original meaning

- (a) 蚕所吐也。从二乡。凡丝之属皆从丝。息兹切。《说文解字》
- (b) 氓之蚩蚩，抱布贸丝。《诗经》——Zhou Dynasty
sell silk
- (c) 皆文之以五声。宫商角徵羽皆播之以八音。金石土革丝木饱竹以是求
silk instruments
之。《周礼》——the Warring States period (475-221 BC)

(22) Metaphor usage

- (a) 十日不满匹，鬢蓬乱若丝。（李白诗）——Tang Dynasty
hair messy like silk
'Hair is messy like silk.'
- (b) 碧玉妆成一树高，万条垂下绿丝绦。《全唐诗》——Tang Dynasty
many hang green silk
'Many osiers hang like green silk.'
- (c) 斜带鸦啼，乱萦莺梦，愁丝如织。《全宋词》——Song Dynasty
upset silk like weav
'Weaving the sadness like silk.'
- (d) 妒梦鸿高，烘愁月浅，萦乱恨丝难整。《全宋词》——Song Dynasty
messy hatred silk hard solve
'Hatred is like messy silk which is hard to solve.'
- (e) 师曰：“命似悬丝。”《五灯会元》——Song Dynasty
life like hanging silk
'Life is as dangerous as a hanging silk.'
- (f) 看看声丝气咽，连呼赵郎而死。《初刻拍案惊奇》——Ming Dynasty
voice silk
'Voice is weak like silk.'

(23) Classifier usage with metaphor

- (a) 愁成旅鬢千丝乱，吟得寒缸短焰终。《全唐诗》——Tang Dynasty
sad like hair thousand linear messy
'The sadness is messy like thousands of hair.'
- (b) 枕痕又露一丝红。《全宋词》——Song Dynasty
one glimmer red
'A glimmer of red.'
- (c) 袅袅千丝翠蔓长。《全宋词》——Song Dynasty
thousand linear green plant long

- ‘Thousands of green plant is long.’
- (d) 李义山如百宝流苏，千丝铁网，绮密环妍，要非适用。
 thousand linear iron net
 ‘Thousands linears of iron net.’
 《升庵诗话》——Ming Dynasty
- (e) 然声音文字部分之严，一丝不乱。《清史稿上》
 one bit no mess
 ‘There is no a bit of mess.(In a good order)’
 ——the Early Republican Period

6. The reduplication and the numeral of the classifier *si*

After reviewing the previous studies of the reduplication of the classifier, there are three basic semantic meanings of the reduplication, including ‘quantity-increasing’ meaning, ‘action-continuing’ meaning, ‘all around’ meaning.

There are three reduplication forms of classifier, including AA, ABB, ABAB. When it comes to *si*, these three forms become 丝丝 *sisi*, 一丝丝 *yisisi*, 一丝一丝 *yisiyisi*.

(24) Regular form:

- (a) 天空飘来了 一 丝 细雨。
 sky waft ASP one bit dizzle
 ‘A bit of dizzle wafted from the sky.’
- (b) 我感受到了 一 丝 凉意。
 I feel ASP one bit coldness
 ‘I felt a bit of coldness.’

6.1.AA form

The AA form of reduplication of *si* has only a quantity-increasing meaning. The regular form means that ‘A drop of rain wafted from the sky’. After the reduplication of *Si*, the sentence means that ‘A drizzling rain was wafting from the sky’.

(25) AA form:

- (a) 天空飘散著 丝丝 细雨。
 sky waft ASP bits dizzle
 ‘Bits of dizzle wafted from the sky.’
- (b) 我感受到了 丝丝 凉意。
 I feel ASP bits coolness
 ‘I felt bits of coolness.’

6.2.ABB form

The ABB form of reduplication of *si* has both quantity-increasing meaning and action-continuing meaning. The regular form means that ‘I felt a bit cold’. After the reduplication like ABB form, the sentence means that ‘I felt bits of coldness that kept coming’.

(26) ABB form:

(a) 天空 飘散 著 一 丝丝 细雨。

sky waft ASP one bits dizzle

‘Bits of dizzle is wafting from the sky.’

(b) 我 感受 到 了 一 丝丝 凉意。

I feel ASP one bits coolness

‘I felt bits of coldness that kept coming.’

6.3.ABAB form

The ABAB form of reduplication of *si* has only an action-continuing meaning. The regular form means that ‘A drop of rain wafted from the sky’. After the reduplication like ABAB form, the sentence means that ‘Drops of the rain wafted from the sky one after one’.

(27) ABAM form:

(a) 天空 飘散 著 一 丝 一 丝 的 细雨。

sky waft ASP one bit one bit DE dizzle

‘Drops of the rain wafted from the sky one after one.’

(b) 我 感受 到 了 一 丝 一 丝 的 凉意。

I feel ASP one bits coolness

‘I felt a bit of coolness that kept coming.’

6.4.The numeral of the classifier *si*

The numeral of *si* is always 几 *ji*, 一 *yi* or 千 *qian*. When using 几丝 *jisi*, it is mostly not referent to the specific number of the object, but referring to in general. What’s more, when it is used as 一丝 *yisi*, which is the most common usage, 一 *yi* (one) is the minimum of the numeral, agreeing with the semantic meaning of *Si*. And 千 *qian* is using to describe that the quantity of the target is large.

7. Other similar classifiers

There are several classifiers having the similar meaning with *si* like *xian* and *lv*. There are comparison in some aspects below.

7.1.Xian (线)

Compared with *si*, the nouns that can follow *xian* are more limited. Similar with *si*,

xian is a metaphoric classifier to describe the thing that is long and thin. *Si* is more productive when it comes to the emotion or sense, and *xian* is limited in many aspects, especial the weaker metaphoric result. *Si* is usually used to describe our subjective feelings of tiny soft things, while *xian* is usually used to describe more objective things. There are some set phrase like 一线天 *yixiantian*, 一线曙光 *yixianshuguang*, 一线希望 *yixianxiwang*, 一线光明 *yixianguangming*, 一线转机 *yixixanzhuanji*. These nouns have both concrete and abstract things. These set phrases are more positive things.

7.2.Lv (缕)

Lv can describe most of the nouns that *Si* can describe, which are the rare cases. As the matter of fact, *lv* is more limited than *si* in the usage like 一丝红晕 *yixianhongyun* can be said but 一缕红晕 *yilvhongyun* is hard to accept. What's more, the same word that is described by *lv* has a dimly discernible meaning. For example, compare 一丝头发 *yisitoufa* with 一缕头发 *yilvtoufa*, the former one is thinner than the later one, which also carries a literary meaning. Also, the classifier *lv* has a twining meaning from its original meaning, which is a collection of linear objects. For example, 一缕头发 *yilvtoufa* is actually the twining collection of hair.

Overall, *si* conveys the linear meaning with a wide-range of collocation with senses, activities and other abstract things. However, *xian* modifies the things with a positive semantic feature, and *lv* modifies the things with a dimly discernible or twining meaning. Both *xian* and *lv* are not commonly used because of the more specific meaning.

8. Application in teaching

In Chinese classifier teaching, students are always confused about the collocations in syntax. Most of teachers also feel difficult to address this problem so that they prefer to regard them as fixed collocations. According to previous researches, nominal classifiers are still nouns, although they have been added to some new functions, such as classifier, they still remain their original semantic features in the context. That requires teachers when teaching linear classifiers, they could combine the semantic

features of different classifiers. For example, *si* holds the semantic features of lean and small, so it can be used to refer to modify shape and amount, and then it develops to modify the degree. If teachers can have a clear explanation like this, it will be easier for students to understand the diverse usage of *si*. Furthermore, if students are supposed to have a good command on these collocations, there is a need for them to comprehend the relationship between classifiers and its metaphor in our life. Therefore, we try to apply the theory of metaphor into class, especially in the linear classifier learning progress. In this thesis, *si* is used as a case study and differences among *si*, *lv* and *xian* will also be considered.

In the classifier teaching class, teachers are required to divide their students into different groups according to their language background. For instance, if students have classifier concepts in their mother tongue or previous learning experience in Chinese classifier, then they can be grouped in the same team. Set an example, students coming from Korean and French enable to grasp Chinese classifier better because there are more similar classifiers in their mother language. Thus, teacher can make a comparison between Chinese and their own language. Specifically, after they learn the classifier *si*, teacher can ask students whether there is similar classifier to *Si* and what exactly the differences are. Students are highly encouraged to make a preparation and even do a significant project on this topic, which helps them understand deeply.

But for those whose language without any concepts of classifiers, such as Russian, the first step is to concrete the notion by teaching methods, such as the physical teaching method. For example, teacher can show a picture of *si*, which is thin, long and light in vision. Then, tell them the similarity between *si* and the target, which need to regard to the analysis we mentioned before and base on the metaphor theory. If the target is in terms of senses, we use vivid pictures or videos to show them the progress of how we understand this world and the art of metaphor. When teaching 一丝微光 *yisiweiguang*, 一丝清香 *yisiqingxiang*, they can involve the linear spread of sight and the curve line of smell painted in comics and cartoons. In addition, it is also essential for teachers to display directly the functions of classifiers, not only in communication but also in cognition; therefore, they will know better when to use classifiers to modify targets.

9. Conclusion

This research explains the diversity usage of different domains of *si* based on the metaphor theory. It can be concluded that due to the metaphor, linear classifier of *si* can collocate with noun phrases mainly in three domains, namely, shape, amount and degree, more specifically, because of its semantic features in lean and small, *si* collocate with a string, a small amount and a slight change.

From the diachronic aspect, it can also be found that linear classifiers to an extent rely on the conversion of their original meaning. In the initial stage, linear classifiers are nouns which refer to the concrete and specific threads, then they gradually turn into classifiers to classify both concrete and abstract things, but the original semantic features like long, thin and light are still retained.

In terms of application, the metaphor theory maybe can also used to explain the diversity usage of other classifiers, such as 片 *pian*, 块 *kuai* and so on. As for the application in Chinese teaching, it is assumed that if teachers enable to combine the metaphor analysis with classifiers teaching, it will be easier for students to understand. In addition, teachers can make use of the pictures or cartoon to make students understand the meaning of *si* more intuitively or other classifiers more in-depth.

In the last part, we make a hypothesis that *si* may be considered as a construction, which is a form-meaning unit, named as linear classifier construction. This construction carries the meaning of thin, long and light object, independent of the words in the phrase. The linear classifier, especially *si*, can have the collocation with not only nouns, but also adjectives even verbs. However, the constraints of the object that can co-occur with linear classifier need to have a further consideration.

Linear classifier construction

Semantic	measurement	linear classifiers	thin, long and light
Lexical	numeral	classifier	nouns, adjectives or verbs
Syntax	modifier		object

There are some unavoidable limitations in this paper. First, the comparison between the usage of *si* and *lv*, *xian* is not enough, so the suggestions for teaching

application is not well formed and they are not put into practice so that the efficiency is uncertain. Second, we put forward a hypothesis in the end that maybe *si* can form a linear classifier construction, but the constraints on the collocations are not clear according to the current data we have collected.

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