

Metaphorical Emotional Expression in Poetry and the Application to Second Language Teaching

Chiang, Yueh-Tzu, English Dep., Tamkang University
Chen, Jhyi Dep. of General Education, CTCN

Abstract

Understanding the relationship between emotion and bodily action will facilitate ESL students' recognition and comprehension of the metaphorical expressions in poems, and lead to longer retention in memory. This study tests whether ESL learners can make use of embodied cognition to make sense of the metaphorical emotional expression in poetry instead of relying merely on the meaning of words. The experiment is conducted given with a pretest/posttest paradigm to test learners' recognition and interpretation in metaphorical emotional expression in poems. A delayed posttest investigates learners' retention of the poems. The control group is directly taught with explanation and translation of the meaning in the poems, while the experimental one receives instruction with semantic mapping in recognizing metaphorical emotional expression that are portrayed in our bodily actions. Consider an example of semantic mapping such as "Love is a box of chocolate": the learners' first interpretation would be to translate directly into the target language, while through semantic mapping, they access embodied images as seeing, smelling and choosing different kinds of chocolates and later find that love is subjective, just as a piece of chocolate they choose lead to sweet or bitter experiences. The delayed posttest is done to compare both groups' retention in memorizing poems and the way of their comprehension. The result is expected to show that the experimental group outperforms the control one in terms of the comprehension and retention of the poems.

1. Introduction

ESL students in Taiwan, when dealing with the materials in the target language, incline to seek their concept or knowledge in first language and translate them word by word within constituents. However, our ordinary conceptual system, according to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), as thinking and acting are metaphorical in nature. Metaphors are encoded in everyday life, the bulk of them are shown in poetries. Studies (i.e. Hogan, 2003) have indicated that our direct feeling and the idea of feeling derived from literature, and the feeling/emotion connects strongly with human bodily action. Understanding the relationship between emotion and bodily action will facilitate ESL students in recognizing the metaphorical expression in poems, comprehending them with their

bodily action and retaining longer in memories.

In order to enhance learners' concept in metaphorical emotional expression in poems, semantic mapping is introduced served as referential channel to bodily action which is on the ground that 'the progression from conceptual meaning to metaphorical meaning is a cognitive activity of mapping from one thing to another' (Li et al., 2005). Example such as "Love is a box of chocolate" learners first interpretation would be directly translate into the target language, while through semantic mapping, they access to body image as seeing, smelling and choosing different kinds of chocolates and later find that love is subjective as what piece of chocolate they choose lead to sweet or bitter experiences.

This study is conducted to examine whether ESL learners can adapt the metaphorical emotional expression in poetry with narrative effect through our body portraying in the mind instead of meaning of words. The experiment is conducted given with pretest, posttest to know learners recognition and interpretation in metaphorical emotional expression as well as delayed posttest to know learners' retention in poems. The control group is directly taught with explanation and translation of the meaning in the poems; while the experimental one receives instruction with semantic mapping in recognizing metaphorical emotional expression that portrayed in our bodily action. The delayed posttest is done to compare both groups' retention in memorizing poems and the way of their comprehension. The result tries to show that the experimental group outperforms the control one in terms of the comprehension and retention of the poems.

2. Review of the Literature

2.1.1 The nature of metaphor in poetry

"Metaphor is essentially the projection of the conceptual structure appropriate to a familiar field onto a different and less familiar field and depends for its effectiveness on a sufficient resemblance between the two fields for the projection to be intelligible." (p.258). The above passage is the interpretation of metaphor from "The Handbook of Linguistics". Metaphor appears to be anywhere, in riddles, folk expressions and proverbs, clichés, literal words, slang (see Bartel, 1983) and definitely poems. The bulk of the metaphor shown in poems that is either explicit or implicit gives people a way to

realize the poetic world and further self-reflect in their own mental mechanism. Poetic language, according to Lakoff and Turner (1989), is “beyond ordinary language—that is something essentially different, special, higher, with extraordinary tools and techniques like metaphor and metonymy, instruments beyond the reach of someone who just talks.” They also mentioned that great poets can use those tools (i.e. metaphor) brilliantly as the same one we use through their persistent attention, study and practice. Bartel (1983) described four qualities of poetic metaphors: their inseparability from their contexts, their freshness and uniqueness, their newness produces not only surprise but also tension and the merge with different metaphors must interact in subtle and interesting ways (p.54, 55). That might count to be the reason why we should learn poems and “dictate” metaphors around us, for ‘most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature’ (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003).

2.1.2 Emotional metaphors and bodily action

There are metaphors embedded in poems, some are popular metaphors, some are humor metaphors and still others are emotional metaphors, etc. When we consider metaphors that encode emotion, we think of our basic senses, such as love, hate, sad and happy. These senses are regarded as universal and could be portrayed by our bodily action. When thinking of love, the universal bodily action would be hug and kiss etc and when thinking of happy, the action might become laughing and smiling etc. There are orientational metaphors and most of them have to do with spatial orientation: up-down, in-out, front-back, on-off etc. (Lakoff & Johnson p.14). The spatial orientations do as our bodily movement and function as they do in our physical environment. A typical example of this metaphor is HAPPY IS UP, which is illustrated in English expressions such as “I’m feeling *up* today.” The concept UP oriented from one’s feeling great and this concept has a basis in our physical and cultural experience. Culture experience may differ from diverse community groups, this is another case. Orientational metaphor might coexist with emotional one; consider Happy IS UP; SAD IS DOWN and the example could be ‘my spirit *rose*’ and ‘I’m feeling *down*.’ According to Lakoff and Johnson, the physical basis ‘is drooping posture typically go along with sadness and depression, erect posture with a positive emotional state.’ Therefore, for the erect

posture, we generally would come up with positive schema and connect with our bodily action, such as eyes rising, jumping up and down etc. The mental form of the mind is emotion and emotion produces feeling. The body's physical form is sensation. When we get an emotion it produces a feeling that turns into a physical sensation. (i.e. watch a scary movie, get frightened, get goose bumps.) That shows you access your mind-body connection.

2.2 Semantic mapping

Semantic mapping is defined as a concept definition mapping but it builds up with respect to a person's prior knowledge or schema. Masters, Mori, & Mori (1993) denote that semantic mapping is a tool for learners to link new information with previous experience in order to achieve vocabulary development. In accordance with Antonacci's explanation (1991), semantic mapping is "a visual representation of knowledge, a picture of conceptual relationship". On the other hand, semantic mapping is a way learners visualize the semantic extension of target word. Pearson and Johnson (1978) proposed that "comprehension is building bridges between the new and the known" (p. 24). Smith (1975) also noted that "comprehension means relating new experience to the already known" (p.10).

In regard to poetry teaching, semantic mapping is one plausible and useful approach to facilitate students' comprehension process. It provides students with gestalt structure which has been defined as 'image schema' by Johnson (1987) and has been an effective way to extend a person's concept from basic to complicate or from concrete to abstract thinking. Students hook their prior experience with the current poems and brainstorm the extended examples that are applicable to poems. By this dual and mutual communication, they can comprehend more about the meaning of the poetry as well as look for the metaphors inside.

3. Research Questions

1. Can metaphorical emotional expression in poems portrayed by semantic mapping instruction get better gains and comprehension than the word to word translation one?
2. Can the instruction of semantic mapping connected to bodily action retain longer

memory of poems than the word to word translation one?

4. The Study

4.1 Participants background information

There are two groups of subjects, the control one consists of 30 college students and the experimental 31 students. They are freshmen from different colleges and the control group comes from science department while the experimental one comes from business department. Their English proficiency are pre-intermediate level.

5.2 Method

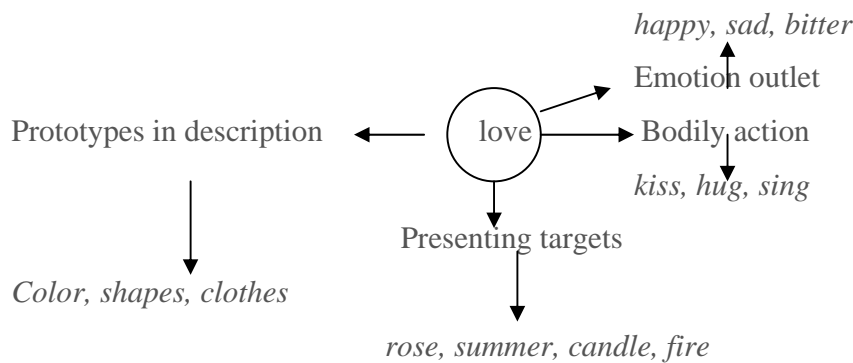
5.2.1 Materials

For the emotional metaphorical metaphor, we try to teach poems that contain feelings of love, the romantic love poems. Moreover, in order to let students internalize their learning from concrete to abstract thinking, we also proposed other poetries that talked about life. The teaching materials, naming the poetry, came from Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1850) "Sonnets from the Portuguese, Sonnet #43: How do I love thee?", Emily Dickinson "Love is anterior to life", William Shakespeare "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day", Emily Dickinson "I'm nobody, who are you?", "Hope is the thing with feathers", Robert Frost "The road not taken", Donne "Elegies 9" and William Shakespeare "As you like you 2.7".

5.2.2 Procedure

With both groups, we designed pretest, posttest and delay posttest (posttest II) (see Appendix) to see their gains in terms of the comprehension to the poems and memory retention. For the analysis of the result, we did both qualitative and quantitative analysis to further explain their learning progress from the instruction.

For the control group, we explain the vocabulary and meanings lines to lines and try to tell them the embedded metaphor within each constitutes. Then we asked them to read the poems with emotion and feelings. For the experimental group, we adapt semantic mapping and teach students to link their bodily action and emotion to the core ideas-"love" and "life". They also need to understand these categories are closed related to metaphor.



Students then worked as pairs were asked to come up with their mapping with love and showed to the whole class. After the mapping idea was rooted in their short-term memory, we distributed the handouts with poems mentioned above. We ask them to underline sentences or words that might be an emotional metaphor. Then we ask them to interpret the poems by themselves, and later we explain more about the poems to let them get more comprehensible input. We ask them to read it with emotion and even role play the poems.

Both groups were tested directly after the instruction to understand students' comprehension toward poems and how they internalize these poems into their own flow of thinking when they were asked to make sentences such as: Love is_____ and life is_____ etc. They also needed to translate some lines of the poems into Chinese- their native language, some are from the ones we taught, some are not. After the posttest, a one week delayed posttest was executed to know students memory retention of the poems with fill in the blank drills.

6. Results

Table I: The comparison of Experimental/pretest –Control/pretest

The comparison of E/Pretest –C/Pretest		
E/Pre-test	C/Pretest	difference
M(SD)	M(SD)	T (Sig)
1.30 (.245)	1.28(.320)	.597 (.556)

$P \leq .05$

Table II: The comparison of Pretest - Posttest and Posttest-posttest II

	Pre-test	Post-test	difference	posttest	Posttest II	difference
	M(SD)	M(SD)	T (Sig)	M(SD)	M(SD)	T (Sig)
Control (26)	1.28(.320)	1.40 (.30)	-1.7(.133)	1.40 (.30)	.356(.73)	7.134(.000)
Experiment (26)	1.30 (.245)	1.61(.278)	-5.0(.222)	1.61(.278)	1.47 (.64)	.901(.376)

$P \leq .05$

The comparison of the Experimental/pretest-Control/pretest shows no significant difference indicating that the two groups' starting point (the prior knowledge and interpretation to the poems) is very much the same. We then propose that different instruction approach might be one countable variable to alter the results. Neither control nor experimental group show the significant difference result. However, mean scores reveal a gap between control and experimental group, by 1.40 and 1.61 respectively (Experimental group>Control group gains).

For the comparison of posttest-posttest II between control and experimental groups, the former shows significant difference (.00) denoting that the participants decrease scores from posttest to posttest II. The data shows that they did not retain longer memory in what they've learned from the instruction. The latter, on the other hands, did not have significant difference (.376) between posttest and posttest II. It reveals that participants' scores did not decline a lot and demonstrates that they retain memory more.

Experimental group>Control group (1.47>.356) mean scores in the posttest II

7. Discussion

The results of the T-test reveal that semantic mapping instruction connected with bodily action has intriguing and potential benefit to ESL students who engaged themselves to the metaphorical emotional expression in poems. Word to word translation in poems may still play a role for comprehending poetry; it may rather be the supplementary approach rather than the predominant one. Metaphorical emotional expression via semantic mapping connected with bodily action shows stronger and better result/gains in terms of memory retention than word to word translation instruction. Students in the experimental group come up with more metaphorical expression when asked to perform their own writing (i.e. in making sentence examples) than their control counterparts.

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Appendix

(1) Elizabeth Barrett Browning

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

(2) Emily Dickinson

LOVE is anterior to life,
Posterior to death.
Initial of creation, and
The exponent of breath.

(3) William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Shall I Compare Thee To A Summer's Day?

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,

So long lives this and this gives life to thee.

十四行詩第十八首
夏日怎能與妳譬喻比擬
妳的可愛溫和夏日難及
五月花蕾惡風吹襲落地
夏日租約倏忽轉瞬到期
有時天眼高灼炎炎難耐
更見烏雲常蔽金色面容
古今紅顏難逃紅顏色衰
命運無常季候欺凌作弄
妳的永恆夏日卻將長存
美貌紅顏必也永世不減
死神難誇妳為地府美人
因妳芳名已成不朽詩篇
除非人世已經滅絕無生
此詩必將永傳與汝永恆

(4) Emily Dickinson

I 'M nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody, too?
Then there 's a pair of us—don't tell!
They 'd banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody!
How public, like a frog
To tell your name the livelong day
To an admiring bog!

(5) Emily Dickinson

HOPE is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I 've heard it in the chilliest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,

It asked a crumb of me.

Robert Frost

“The Road Not Taken”

Two Roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that had made all the difference

Donne

“Elegies, 9”

No Spring, nor Summer beauty hath such grace,
As I have seen in one Autumnal face.

William Shakespeare

As you Like It 2.7

All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts.