

Metaphors in Mandarin Meteorological Expression in Cyber News in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

Metaphor has been widely discussed (Ahrens, Chung, & Huang, 2003; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Tsau, Tsai, & Liu, 2001). There are actually metaphors used in meteorological expressions; however, these metaphors are rarely investigated. In order to observe what kinds of metaphors occur in Mandarin meteorological expressions and how people comprehend them, the researcher investigated 521 cyber weather reports in 2006 and conducted a Context Comprehension Task (CCT). There were two studies in this research. In study 1, the researcher employed Sinica BOW to categorize the collected metaphors, and the suggested results became the standard answers in Study 2 (CCT). The CCT consists of three purposes: (1) to assess people's awareness of metaphors used in communication; (2) to assess whether people comprehend the contexts created by the metaphorical expressions; and (3) to assess the correlation between people's metaphor awareness and their context comprehension, their metaphor awareness and comprehension of messages, and their context comprehension and message comprehension. The results of Study 1 show that the metaphors used in Mandarin meteorological expressions can be categorized in terms of personification and objectification, or as metaphors of abstraction. In addition, the researcher found that the forms of Mandarin metaphors are verbs or nouns, i.e. the verb 襲擊 (to attack) converts the weather into an aggressive person. An interesting phenomenon related to noun metaphors was found and it is defined as Partial Metaphor, which means that a two syllable Mandarin simple word (單詞) retains a semantic head and a source domain, and this simple word creates the visual or mental contexts to describe the head, i.e. 火苗 (a fire seedling). Although the CCT results show that people have their metaphor awareness and they do actually understand the gist of the message, they can not get the word context of the metaphors. Moreover, there is no correlation among people's metaphor awareness, context comprehension, and the comprehension of messages. One possible explanation rests on the idea that a native speaker may gain the gist of a message without comprehending the contexts created by the metaphor. In other words, the participants comprehend the literal meaning of the messages rather than going through a deep process.

Keywords : metaphor comprehension ; pragmatics ; cognition ; context ; meteorological expression

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