A Pedagogical Perspective on Advanced L2 Learners’ Acquisition of
Chinese Conceptual Metaphor

A Thesis

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By

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Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between the features of cultural-specific metaphors in Chinese language and the acquisition of these metaphors by advanced-level L2 learners of Chinese. After reviewing previous research and various approaches on the education of metaphors in second language education, this study proposes a learner-centered pedagogy which is based on Zull’s four-phased learning cycle for the acquisition of metaphorical expressions in Chinese culture.

In addition, examples of advanced-level Chinese L2 learners’ application of cultural metaphors in the formal writing will be presented. The factors which might influence their successful usage and further acceptance by the native speakers from the target culture will be further analyzed.
Dedication

Dedicated to my parents in Hunan, China.

献给我远在中国湖南的父母双亲
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Chapter 1  Definitions of Metaphor

1.1 Introduction

Since Lakoff and Johnson’s publication of *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) threw new light on the topic of “metaphor”, the cognitive aspect of metaphor has drawn great attention in linguistic studies. Before their research on “conceptual metaphor”, the usage of metaphor was mostly treated as rhetorical figures of speech, or simply an imaginative style in speech and creative writing. This negative viewpoint towards metaphor was shared by numerous well-known authors, such as Shelley and Wordsworth, and was even opposed as “unreal” by some philosophers such as Plato (Kövecses 2006: 8-9).

The research on the cognitive aspects of metaphor has exerted far-reaching impact in multiple fields. Some Chinese linguists have used metaphor theories to reveal the cognitive relationship underneath the directional verbal expressions, such as 上来 shanglai (up-come) “come up”, and 下去 xiaqu (away-down) “get down” (Yu 1998). This topic was also explored in the nominal collocations in idiomatic usages, such as xin (heart), mu (eye), kou (mouth) (Yu 2003 & 2004, Jing-Schmidt 2008). Another perspective is to delve into the cultural concepts related to emotions in Chinese idioms and two-part allegorical expressions such as 面有愁色 mianyou chouse (face carry worry
color) “to have a worried expression on one’s face”, and 乐极生悲 leji shengbei (happy extreme produce sorrow) “Extreme joy begets sorrow” (King 1989).

In addition, the research done by cognitive linguists has produced immediate benefits for language educators to incorporate the topic of conceptual metaphors into second/foreign language instruction. For instance, how teachers view their role in professional practices, or how instructors conceptualize the relationship between students and teachers. And various pragmatic approaches to teach metaphors in language education have been explored as well (de Guerrero and Olga 2001, Chen 2000, Ahren 2002, Low 2008).

However, these proposals and approaches are predominantly from the instructional perspective or for testing purpose. The learner’s acquisition of these conceptual metaphors is somehow unstressed. And their role in this dynamic learning process is missing. Moreover, these approaches mainly focus on the instruction of conceptual metaphors, but the unique features of cultural-specific conceptual metaphors have not been sufficiently explored.

Thus, it is worthwhile for further discussion of the following two questions. One, how can L2 speakers learn those conceptual metaphors that are culturally specific, for instance, in Chinese culture? And two, how can learners further apply them in the target culture without them being rejected as mistakes?

Based on the evaluation of various approaches currently available, this thesis proposes a learner-centered pedagogy for the acquisition of conceptual metaphors. And from the case study of advanced-level L2 learners of Chinese, it suggests that the
cultural-specific features in metaphor should be emphasized to enhance accurate usage. And last, the relationship between L2 learners’ creative usage of cultural metaphor and cultural permissibility will be presented.

1.2 What is Metaphor?

There are several expressions containing “metaphor” used in this thesis, including “literal metaphor”, “conceptual metaphor”, “cultural metaphor”, “conventional metaphor”, and “novel metaphor”. Hence, a short introduction of the origin of this word “metaphor” might help to clarify the differences among these terms.

The first known usage of the word “metaphor” could be dated back to the late fifteenth century. It might come from the old French word “métaphore” via Latin “metaphora” meaning “carrying over”, a latinisation of the Greek lexicons “μεταφορά” (metaphorá) as a noun and “εταφέρω” (metaphero) as a verb which means “(to) transfer; carrying over; to carry over”. The word “εταφέρω” consists of two compounds: “μετά” (meta) indicating “between” and “φέρω” (pherō) meaning “to bear; to carry”. Thus, the original meaning of metaphor has already contains a process of transference between two objects or entities.¹

Some scholars indicate that metaphor contains the same mechanism as analogy, because metaphor involves comparison between two objects (Genter & Bowdle, 2008). However, in metaphor, these two objects do not necessarily come from the same or equal

¹ Please refer to the online Merriam-Webster Dictionary (http://www.merriam-webster.com), and the online source from A Greek-English Lexicon edited by Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, at Perseus (http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/). Last time visited on April 3rd, 2011.
category. For instance, the items used in metaphor are unlikely to be concrete or familiar ones at the same time. Rather, the two items to be compared in a metaphor usually come from two dichotomous categories: concreteness versus abstractness, or familiarity versus novelty. And the transference by using metaphor happens from concreteness to abstractness, or from familiarity to novelty.

In addition, there is always a directional preference underlying the metaphors that we use daily. The process of transference is always organized in a way so that concreteness can be carried over into abstractness, or familiarity into novelty. Rarely, it works the opposite way. Please compare these two metaphorical expressions in English.

(1) \textit{All jobs are jails.} \\
\textit{All jails are jobs} (Gentner & Bowdle 2008: 115).

For most native English speakers, the first sentence sounds more natural or preferable. But the second one is less likely be to accepted. In these two examples above, the item \textit{jails} contains more concrete attributes, such as walls, bars, cells, pain, darkness, etc. The item \textit{jobs} belongs to a more abstract category. Those salient concrete features in \textit{jails} are transferred to the abstract category of \textit{jobs}. That is why \textit{jobs} can be painful, hopeless (dark), limited freedom (cells), etc. Hence, the transference of attributes between the two items is actually organized from concreteness to abstractness, or in some other cases, from familiarity to novelty.

\footnote{“Familiarity” here refers to what is known, and “novelty” means the unknown.}
Furthermore, in terms of word order, abstract items are often placed in the initial
sentential position, indicating a hierarchy of information processing, that is, what is more
important or unknown will be mentioned in the very beginning in the metaphorical
representation, e.g. ABSTRACTNESS/NOVELTY IS
CONCRETENESS/FAMILIARITY. For example, the expressions “The stock market is
going up” and “They raised the price” share the metaphor “MORE IS UP” (Lakoff, 2008).

For this reason, this thesis disagrees with the opinion that metaphor equals to
analogy, because the latter does not necessarily have to obey directional preference, and
the items to be compared could possibly come from the same category. For example, in
the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or Graduate Record Examinations (GRE), analogy is
often used in the verbal section, “HAND: PALM:: FOOT: ____”. And the answer is
SOLE. None of these four items come from different levels of category. And the order
can be reversed, “PALM: HAND:: SOLE: FOOT”.

In short, the term metaphor discussed in the thesis refers to the transference of
salient attributes between two dichotomous categories, namely, concreteness versus
abstractness, or familiarity versus novelty. And there is always a directional preference in
the representation of metaphor.

1.3 What are Literal, Conceptual, and Cultural Metaphors?

In Lakoff and Johnson’s book, the metaphors were named as “conceptual
metaphors”. This term emphasizes the underlying systematic associations between
language and thought via a process called “mapping” from the concrete world onto
mental space. Also, it distinguishes itself from “literal metaphors” which have been traditionally studied by literary critics, poets, and novelists (Chou 2006: 11-12).

For this reason, a lot of studies on the topic of metaphors are not actually studies of conceptual metaphors, but simile, which is a figure of speech with literary grace (Clausner and Croft 1997: 247). For instance, in Chinese,

(2) 雨水是天空的泪珠。
*Yushui shi tiankong de leizhu.*
Raindrops BE sky POS tears.
Raindrops are the tears from the sky.

(3) 月亮好像电灯泡一样。
*Yueliang haoxiang diandengpao yiyang.*
The moon like light bulb the sameness.
The moon is like a light bulb.

If we analyze the features of the entities for comparison in (1) and (2), we can find that both 雨水*yushui* (raindrops) and 天空*tiankong* (sky), or 月亮*yueliang* (the moon) and 电灯泡*diandengpao* (light bulb) are concrete in nature. None of these has abstract attributes in the literal metaphors. Unlike in conceptual metaphors, the order of the entities for comparison in literary metaphors can be reversed or interchangeable.

For instance, *Yushui haoxiang leizhu* (Raindrops are like tears) can be reversed into *Leizhu haoxing yushui* (Tears are like raindrops), even though the meaning in these two literal metaphors changes. In contrast, the entities in conceptual metaphors are cognitively sequenced, and the word order is always ABSTRACTNESS/NOVELTY first, but CONCRETENESS/FAMILIARITY comes later.
In addition to clarifying the thin line between “conceptual metaphors” and “literary metaphors”, Lakoff and Johnson also discovered that conceptual metaphors vary in cross-cultural contexts. They have acknowledged “the substantial cultural differences that determine which metaphors are prominent within a culture and how they are elaborated in language, ritual, and symbol interactions” (Chou: 11).

Jing-Schmidt (2008) used corpus study to compare the metaphors of speech articulation in English, German, Japanese, and Chinese. According to her study, there are linguistic expressions sharing similar conceptual metaphors about words and speech. For example, in English, there are expressions of “badmouth someone” Similarly, in Japanese, there are “warukuchi (bad-mouth) ‘slander’”. In German, people also use “böse Zungen (evil-tongue) ‘verbally vicious people’”. In Chinese, it is “烂舌头 lan shetou (rotten-tongue) ‘slander’”.

However, Jing-Schmidt also noticed the conceptualization of garrulity is processed by the physical sensation of lacking weight in Japanese, e.g., kuchi ga karui (mouth-light). But there is no such an expression in Chinese. Rather, its counterpart in Chinese is zui-sui (mouth-shattered), indicating that the nature of garrulity is approached via the aspect of physical disintegration.

Even though some metaphors are shared across cultures, their frequency of usage differs. A corpus-based study is conducted on the metaphorical expressions in the domain of economics by using the corpora of English, French, and Dutch texts (Deignan 2008: 289). Across these three languages, the metaphors containing PATH, HEALTH, and WAR share very similar composition. However, the frequency for these three concepts
varies in specific languages. For instance, the metaphor about HEALTH in French is three times more frequent than that in Dutch. And the metaphor of PATH is preferred among English speakers to the other two metaphors. And the metaphorical expressions for WAR are more frequent in French and Dutch.

Studies have shown that even though human beings share universal experience, its embodiment in language varies in different cultures (Sharifian, Dirven, Yu, and Niemeier 2008). When researching on the equivalent concept of “mind” in cross-cultural context based upon written materials and idiomatic expressions, Sharifan, Dirven, and Yu have concluded three types of conceptualization: Abdominocentrism (where the belly is the locus of thinking, knowing, and feeling); Cardiocentrism (where the heart is organ of the “mind”), and Cerebrocentrism (where the head is the central faculty of cognition and emotion). An interesting case was recorded in the autobiography of the Swiss Psychiatrist Carl Jung. This following dialogue took place between him and “Mountain Lake”, a chief of Native Americans in New Mexico in 1932 (Yu 2009: 6).

(4) “We do not understand them, we think that they are all mad.” When Jung asks why he thinks they are all mad, Mountain Lake replies, “They say they think with their heads.” “Why of course”, says Jung. “What do you think with?” “We think here”, says Chief Mountain Lake, indicating his heart.

For Chief “Mountain Lake” and his Native American people, HEART IS THE MACHINE for thinking. But for Carl Jung and his western contemporaries, MIND/HEAD IS THE MACHINE. Therefore, from the case above, the bodily experience might be universal, but the formulation of conceptual metaphors could be
subject to specific cultural environments, folk values, collective memories, or social interactions.
2.1 Importance of Cultural Metaphors for L2 Learners of Chinese

2.1.1 Linguistic Aspects

Can language instructors and L2 learners avoid metaphors in general? Empirical studies on L1 speakers have indicated that there seems to be no priority between literal and metaphorical expressions in terms of information processing in the human brain. By using brain-recording (e.g. event-related potential patterns) and brain-imaging techniques (e.g. fMRI), if given a linguistic input, the brain area will be activated to compute both literal and metaphorical meanings in parallel, and there is little evidence found for differences in terms of activation patterns for literal versus metaphoric language processing (Glucksberg 2008: 69).

An inference can be drawn from above for L2 pedagogy. If the goal of learning Chinese as L2 is to be native-like, then acquisition of metaphor is unavoidable, since both literal and metaphorical expressions are likely to be processed at the same in the same brain areas. And the validity to assume that education on non-literal meanings is optional is greatly weakened.

Further, according to Lakoff and Johnson, although conceptual metaphor is used in daily basis, the usage is in a very implicit way. Even native speakers are not aware of its linguistic features, such as semantics, syntax, or register (formality or informality). For
L2 learners of Chinese, the linguistic knowledge is even more difficult to have access to, especially because Chinese is a “less commonly taught language”, or even a “truly foreign language” (Walker 1989 & 2010).

Specifically, incorporating cultural-specific metaphors in learning Chinese as L2 might help to reveal the once-implicit relationship between verb-noun collocational expressions. For instance, in the Chinese phrase of 做决定 (zuo jueding: to make a decision), “decision” is treated as a product which can be fabricated. A variation of this expression in Chinese is 拿主意 (na zhuyi: “to take an idea”, to make a decision). But L2 learners of Chinese might need to know that the former is neutral in style, but the latter is more colloquial.

In 拿主意, “ideas” are very similar to some random items in a storage box. All one needs to do is to select and pick out one item to cope with the here-and-now situation. Thus, 拿主意 might contain a sequence of actions, but 做决定 may not. In English, 做决定 can be translated directly into “make a decision”, but 拿主意 does not sound acceptable for native speakers if it is translated literally “take an idea”.

Thus, for English-speaking learners of Chinese, it is more difficult for them to establish an equivalent connection between “make a decision” and 拿主意. Instead, 做决定 would be a direct, and reliable gateway for them to connect their repertoire in the first language and the target language.
Furthermore, even though these two expressions are both verb-noun collocational expressions, it is more likely for adjectives be inserted in 做决定. The following example is from the corpus at the Center for Chinese Linguistics, Beijing University.

(5) 在你做重大决定前，还是先睡个大觉吧。
Zai ni zuo zhongda jueding qian, haishi xian shui ge da jiao ba.
At you make important decision before, still first sleep CL big sleep. Before you make any important decision, please rest well and clear up your mind first.

But, there is no cases of“拿重大主意” in the corpus. Therefore, 主意 is mostly a bare noun. In addition, it can not carry a number in the front. In contrast, 决定 can be accountable. For instance:

(6) 做好人生中的两个决定。
Zuohao rensheng zhong de lianggan jueding.
Make-well life within POS two CL decision. To make two right decisions in your life.

For L2 learners of Chinese, all these linguistic knowledge in the metaphorical expressions are not easily accessible. Even though there might be similar usages between English and Chinese, the details still can make a huge difference. Therefore, learning cultural metaphors will increase L2 learners’ linguistic knowledge.

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2.1.2 Cultural Aspects

The viewpoint towards “language” in this thesis naturally leads the discussion to “culture”. In 1921, Sapir tried to define language that it is “a purely human… method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols.” (Huang, Ahrens, and Chen 1998: 152) Recent cognitive studies have shown the communicative aspect of language, affirming that the grammar of language, rather than innate and universal, is shared knowledge of the speaker of that language (Tomasello 2003: 207, 278). In this sense, cultural-specific metaphors are part of the linguistic knowledge shared by a certain community. Jerome Bruner (1990: 40) adopted a term called “folk psychology” to describe how the use of language for social communication is also learned cultural behavior.

For L2 learners of Chinese, especially the ones at advanced level, they will experience numerous cases of the divergence of thoughts in the fields such as psychology, dialectics, categorization, envisioning, etc. (Nisbett, 2003). Also, they will encounter multiple situations to apply metaphorical expressions in Chinese environments. Each application of these cultural metaphors will also enhance their understanding of the belief system and daily practices. The learners’ own experience will further facilitate the compilation of stories consisting of similar themes, actors, agents, and personas. In this way, the process of learning cultural-specific metaphors by L2 learners of Chinese is merged into the constructions of a second-worldview about the knowledge of a learnt culture (Walker & Noda, 2000).
An example about cultural differences can be found in English, “a painful experience” can refer to a fragment of unpleasant personal memory. This awful experience is based on the speaker’s somatic feeling, “painful”. Each time when the speaker has a similarly unpleasant or exhaustive experience, the feeling about pain will be triggered, even though the pain is not necessarily accompanied. But in Chinese, this metaphorical phrase should be

(7) 痛苦的经历
*tongku de jingli*
painful-bitter experience
painful experience

Other than being painful, this experience for native Chinese speakers is always connected with the taste of bitterness. Therefore, for L2 learners of Chinese, the linguistic knowledge is very simple, just adding another adjective. However, what matters here is for them to imagine the physical experience and to share cognitive perspective with native speakers of Chinese.

Furthermore, different speakers of the same language tend to use, to some degree, fixed expressions in a certain situation. And if the stimuli of the situation stay the same, different speakers of different languages tend to use a set of expressions different from each other but relatively similar within the same language. In an experiment to test if there is a universal form of mental representation, monolingual children in a number of languages were given a picture storybook to describe the same events in a series. German-speaking children tended to use habitual expressions in German, and so do
Spanish-speaking children in Spanish (Slobin 1996). In other words, their worldview is culturally determined when they select information to compile a reasonable and meaningful script to them. Similarly, metaphors have “cultural relativity”, and this cultural relativity is greatly bounded by a specific language.

After being created and shared in communal practices, some metaphors can exist over a long period of time in one culture. Rather than being evanescent, they become recurrent cultural themes in one culture. In this sense, this thesis would like to adopt the view that cultural metaphors are prototypical in one culture, and they could be viewed as “cultural models”.

The definition of “cultural models” comes from various disciplines and fields. For cognitive and anthropological linguists, such as George Lakoff, Zoltán Kövecses, Dorothy Holland, and Naomi Quinn, the cultural models, sometimes also known as folk models, are the basic image-schematic structure deeply rooted in the cultural knowledge. These models are organized in hierarchical sequences of prototypical events and concepts, for instance, proverbs, metaphors, and prototypes (Kövecses 2000: 166; Holland and Quinn 1987: vii-x).

In each cultural model, there lies a hidden plot or structure with significance bound to it. Only after grasping the structure of that certain archetype, is one eventually able to understand its underlying significance. Therefore, cultural metaphors act as “cultural models” which are embodied in recurring patterns or images of primary cultural significance with deep psychic resonance that occurs in various literary genres. They function as “crystallizers” in the center of cultures, languages, communal practices, and
shared belief (Hart 1994: 92).

Generally speaking, cultural models are very “formulaic… in the cornerstone of the creative imagination” (Frye 1976: 36). They can invoke individuals “to persuade themselves and others, to order one’s own inner experience, and to motivate behavior” (Holland and Quinn: 9). In this sense, cultural metaphors just work as models. They can help regulate human behavior in a particular culture, make sense of their actions, and integrate their experiences in an organic body of the past, present, and future.

2.1.3 Why Advanced-level L2 Learners?

Based on studies of children’s first words and the following development, this thesis acknowledges that L2 learners of Chinese start encountering metaphorical expressions even at beginning level, but still proposes that a period of focused training in terms of acquiring cultural metaphors should be placed at advanced level.

Empirical research has shown that metaphoric production actually starts at very early stage in L1 environment, almost companying the very first utterances among 2-year-old children (Patrotté, 1985). Another ontogenetic study about children’ acquisition of metaphorical expression in Italian as L1 found that this process is developed step by step (Levorato 1993). And this developmental viewpoint might also be helpful to construct a model for L2 learners’ gradual acquisition of cultural metaphors.

According to Lavorato, the acquisition of metaphorical expressions for L1 children has four distinctive steps. At the first step, children have shown the competence to utter expressions containing metaphorical meaning, but in general they still tend to
“apply a literal strategy in the processing of text or discourse.” It indicates that even though metaphorical expression appear early in age, the majority of utterances is more literal (pp. 120-122).

And the characteristic of the second step is “the child now can go beyond purely literal strategies and a purely referential and literal use of the language.” This is a transitional stage until the emergence of the consciousness at the third step, in which children develop an awareness that language is arbitrary in nature and it is not always effective if they retrieve meaning only from the literal surface. It indicates that children have gained strategies to interpret speakers’ intentionality rather than simply words themselves.

At the fourth step, due to the increment of children’s repertoire of linguistic knowledge, both literal and metaphorical, children are able to “link expressions to information and concepts already acquired and so may acquire conventionalized expressions such as idioms, frozen metaphors, formulaic expressions, and so on.”

The fourth step in Lavorato’s study resembles, to some degree, the stage for advanced L2 learners of Chinese, since they have grasped adequate knowledge about literal expressions and are faced with a large amount of formulaic expressions such as conventional metaphors. In addition, researchers in L2 language education have noticed a positive correlation between the production and preference of metaphor and the language level of learners (Trosborg, 1985). A possibly reason that less advanced L2 learners are unlikely to produce or understand metaphorical expressions are related to the fact that these learners “have less knowledge of how linguistic classification is done
correctly in the foreign language. Consequently, they are less able to create consciously ‘metaphoric overlaps’." (p. 553)

2.2 Difficulties for L2 Learners to Acquire Cultural Metaphors

2.2.1 How to Identify Them?

It seems that most language educators can easily reach a consensus that culturally specific metaphors are important for L2 learners, however, the doubt is how is it possible for L2 learners to learn them, since most of them are implicit and difficult to identify even for native speakers.

For instance, in the textbook of *Chinese: Communicating in the Culture (CCC)*, Unit 3 Stage 9 (Walker & Lang, 2007), there is a metaphorical expression,

(8) 书上说

*shu-shang shuo*

book-above says

what is said in the book

In this expression, the localizer *shang* (above, upon) indicates that abstract content of the book is placed on the surface of the pages as if the pages were platforms where the content could stand upon. In contrast, in English, the equivalent expression uses the proposition “in”, as if the content was an individual item contained in the book. The conceptualization about how abstract content is located in books are different in Chinese and English, and this difference is often unnoticeable even for native speakers, if without deep reflection and careful observation.
Moreover, the localizer in Chinese *shang* is extended into a number of similar usage sharing the same pattern, such as:

(9) 报上说
*bao-shang shuo*
newspaper-above says
what is said in the newspaper

(10) 信上说
*xin-shang shuo*
letter-above says
what is said in the letter

(11) 杂志上说
*zazhi-shang shuo*
magazine-above says
what is said in the magazine

(12) 电视上说
*dianshi-shang shuo*
TV-above says
what is said on TV

(13) 网上说
*wang-shang shuo*
Web-above says
what is said in the website

(14) 会上说
*hui-shang shuo*
conference-above says
what is said in the conference

All these metaphorical expressions share the same localizer *shang*. This is probably inducted from *shu-shang shuo*, because books might be more frequently used in daily life. Thus, *shu-shang shuo* represents a prototypical usage for similar experience to
be conceptualized in Chinese culture.

But these extended expressions could be very challenging for L2 learners, if they have no access to a number of expressions sharing the linguistic pattern X-shang shuo, or to recognize that X-shang shuo originates from shu-shang shuo as a prototype. Overall, the initial difficulty for L2 learners’ acquisition of cultural metaphors is to recognize them and to further identify the formulaic patterns, if any, in another culture.

However, this thesis would argue that the difficulty to identify the metaphorical relationships for L2 learners is not a solid reason to stop learning cultural metaphors in L2 education. First, a number of researches have been done on the linguistic representation of cultural metaphors, and its underlying mapping principles. The result from these studies can be immediately useful for language instructors or L2 learners. Second, it is urgent for language educators to start organizing what have been revealed and recognized, such as a dictionary or a reference book about Chinese cultural metaphors, so that the once-implicit or hidden cognitive mechanism in cross-cultural context is more accessible for L2 learners. For instance, all the conventional metaphorical usages for shang in examples from (8) to (14). As a matter of fact, some researchers have commenced the journey to develop various approaches to teach metaphors to L2 learners.

2.2.2 Challenge of Precision

If the first challenge is to identify the existence of cultural metaphors, then the next is to find out if there is any pattern within these metaphors. Lakoff (1993:215) hypothesized that there exist two domains in all conceptual domains: a target domain and
a source domain. Metaphor is constructed by transforming the salient features from the source domain to the target domain by the process of “mapping”. And this process must follow a principle called “invariance”.

For instance, in the case study of the public speech during presidential elections in Taiwan (Lu & Ahrens 2008: 387-391), the conceptual metaphor, COUNTRY IS A BUILDING, consistently runs through the whole speech. In Figure 1, there are corresponding relationships underlying the conceptual metaphor COUNTRY IS A BUILDING. Citizens and political leaders play the role of builders. The step-by-step development of a country is similar to the process the construction. The abstract features of country, citizens, political leaders, and the development of a nation are projected onto the categories of concrete buildings, builders, and building construction respectively (see Figure 1).
Furthermore, the mapping between source and target domains in this metaphor is uni-directional and irreversible. It is rarely acceptable if one, even for native speakers, creates a metaphor that COUNTRY IS BUILDER, or CITIZENS AND POLITICAL LEADERS ARE BUILDING CONSTRUCTION. These expressions are against our physical experience in real world. In this sense, it seems that the stable, constant, and predictable relationships in Figure 1 might help L2 learners to acquire conceptual metaphors.

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5 Adapted from Lu & Ahrens (2008), p. 387.
However, in reality, it is very difficult to find a principle with absolute precision. In the example COUNTRY IS A BUILDING, the exact details are difficult to pin down. A building might have security guards, janitors, and mechanics to maintain the running of a building. The physical structure of a building also includes a plumbing system, sewage, bathrooms, an entrance, etc. But all these details are not necessarily incorporated in the target domain, according to the principles of mapping in metaphor. Rather, only some salient and significant features in the source domain are preserved for the mental projection, for instance, the builders, the foundation, construction, etc. This ambiguity still constitutes a big challenge for L2 learners to produce accurate conceptual metaphors.

A second challenge lies in multiple pairings between the source-target domains. Among the examples raised by Lakoff, there is LOVE IS A JOURNEY. But LOVE could also be FIRE or POISON. Which model should L2 learners follow? Langacker used a term called “domain matrices”. It describes the overlapping portion of different conceptual metaphors (Clausner and Croft 1997: 276). This discovery can provide a convenient design to serve the purpose of acquisition of cultural-specific metaphors for L2 learners.

A case can be found in the metaphor of ECONOMY IS PERSON in both Chinese and English. Figure 2 showcases a more complicated model with overlapped source domains in a cross-cultural setting. Both the target domains in Chinese and English share the items concerning “growth” which comes from similar experience in the source domain. Thus, in both Chinese and English, there are expressions projecting the physical growth of a human being onto the development of one nation’s economy. However, some
items are only available in the Chinese target domain, for instance, “lifeblood”, which the English one lacks. Even though there is an item “blood” in the shared source domain. English speakers would not use it in a metaphorical way. For the same reason, Chinese speakers would not use “shudder” to compose metaphors in Chinese culture. Overall, Chinese speakers tend to use features such as blood, pathologic process, and organism process to form metaphors. English speakers also use part of organism process, but it is mapped onto different items in the target domain. In addition, they generally tend to select psychological and physiologic processes as their source domain, but Chinese speakers would be very unlikely to (see Figure 2).
The significance of Figure 2 is to provide a very good model to present how the same physical experience is mapped onto different categories in various cultures. Although multiple pairings can take place between the source-target domains, the overlapping area in the model represents the shared metaphors across cultures. And the

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6 Adapted from Chung, Ahrens & Huang (2005), p. 565.
rest area without overlapping refers to the unique features in cultural-specific metaphors. This model will be able to provide a relatively clear and convenient visual explaining why some conceptual metaphors are culturally specific.

2.3 Current Pedagogical Approaches

2.3.1 Usage-based Approach

So far, language educators have proposed various approaches dealing with this challenge. Low (2008) suggests that based on how metaphors are used in specific linguistic context, it is important for L2 learners to work with simple metaphors first. After a careful analysis of the relationships between the items in the source-target domains, learners can move up to the usage of more complex ones in reality.

Furthermore, Low suggests that it also helps to identify various levels of metaphorical usage, for instance, “less metaphoric”, “not metaphoric at all”, etc. This suggestion matches the scholarly discovery about various degree of conventionality among metaphors. Some are “novel metaphors”, which is the most productive and tolerant for variations. Then, some are “conventional metaphors” whose usage has been commonly fixed, but still with certain freedom to vary or deviate from the standard usage. And the third type is called “dead metaphors” whose usage has been fossilized.

Also, Low has noticed that there exists a huge amount of metaphoric lexis which have been revealed and recognized by researchers, such as “go through homework”, “go over it”, “run through a text”, “run over it”, “look through it”, “look over it”, “look at a topic”, “skip over something”, ‘pass over it”, “touch on it”, “work though it”, “work on
it”, etc. (p. 223). Therefore, Low suggests a very conductive solution might start from systematic vocabulary training, for instance, the usage of certain verbs or propositions, since all these metaphorical expressions share similar collocations.

Low’s suggestions are reasonable, to some degree, and it might be a conductive and straightforward approach for language instructors. Low’s proposal also echoes Traugott’s study in 1985. There are three “sites” in the linguistic system which are comparatively easier to trace for language educators: (i) a set of spatio-temporal terms; (ii) a set of performative verbs; and (iii) the thematic structure. Practicing these terms, verbs, and themes resembles vocabulary usage training. Both Low’s and Traugott’s research provides very good inspiration about at least where to start in terms of teaching metaphors to L2 learners in classroom. In addition, they actually proposed a way to help language learners to organize their knowledge and to perceive meaningful patterns in language learning, which is crucial to build expertise, especially for advanced learners (Glaser & Chi, 1988).

2.3.2 Frequency- or Corpus-based Approach

We can also find another related research further suggesting vocabulary training should be combined with frequency in terms of pragmatic usage in Cameron’s study (2008). Actually, the term “vocabulary” here should be narrowed down to verbal collocations. Cameron argues that this is because verbal expressions are encoded very differently in cross-linguistic contexts. In contrast, the referentiality in nominal expressions is relatively more stable. In addition, when she was conducting her corpus
study, Cameron noticed that some verbs have higher frequency to be used in metaphoric collocations than in literal ones. For instance, for the verb *erupt*, only 38% of its usage are collocated with *volcano(es)*, but the other 62% is always combined with *fire* or *sound*, *war*, *groups of people*, *new situations or movements*, or *spots on the skin*.

An empirical example can be found in Chung and Ahren’s comparative study on the metaphorical usage of 摆 *bai* (“to put, to place”) and 放 *fang* (“to put, to place”) in Chinese (2008:423). Even though *bai* and *fang* have very similar meanings in Chinese, the corpus study shows that *fang* (44%) has higher frequency of metaphorical usage than that for *bai* (27%). And when these two verbs are used non-metaphorically, the primary meaning for *fang* is “to put, to place” (21%). But the primary literal usage for *bai* means “to arrange for display” (27%). Only 12% of the non-metaphorical usage of *bai* contains the meaning “to put, to place”.
摆 bai “put”   放 fang

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphorical usages</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Metaphorical usages</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrange for display</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Put (things)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay (baby, basin, book, dishes, etc.)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Let go (animals, person, prey, etc)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put (things)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Discharge (bomb, fire, firework, etc.)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set up</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Keep (meat, tea leaves, things)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pose</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Play (record, music, etc.)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Non-classified</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Add</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Locate (building)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. The Frequency of 摆 bai and 放 fang

From this perspective, the frequency-based and corpora-based approaches could also throw new light on cultural metaphors to L2 learners.

2.3.3 Image-based Approach

Another instructional approach is image-based, and it emphasizes the importance of the imagistic themes in conceptual metaphors. Many cognitive experiments have revealed that human beings possess the abilities to form metaphorical expressions based on mental images (Gibbs & Matlock, 2008). And the image could be visual representation of the cognitive structures for the conceptual metaphors. There are various types of images illustrated in the results of the cognitive experiments. In general, there are three models for the construction of imagistic structures: 1) Pairing and Projection, 2) Tree-branch structure, and 3) Tempo-spatial relationship.

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7 Adapted from Chung & Ahren (2008), p. 423.
In this model (see Figure 3), the items contained in the source domain are projected uni-directionally onto the specific items in the target domain. And the direction of arrows cannot be reversed. The relationship between the items in the source-target domains could be one-on-one in a simple model, or multiple-to-one in a complex model. Furthermore, the circles of the domain represent boundaries on which the items enclosed within cannot freely trespass.

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8 Adapted from Lu & Ahrens (2008), p. 387.
Figure 4 above resembles an upside-down treelike structure with its branches spreading out. This image represents the hierarchical relationships between prototypes and their subordinate entities. It reflects the categorization in human cognition, and vividly reveals how the taxonomic components might differ in different cultural systems.

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9 This figure is designed by Clair (2002). Please see [http://epistemic-forms.com/R-creativity.html](http://epistemic-forms.com/R-creativity.html). Last time visited on August 3rd, 2011.
The Model of Tempo-spatial relationship in Figure 5 captures the details of the motion themes (directions, sequences, perspectives, etc.) hidden in the cultural metaphors. For instance, in the English metaphor *quarrel over*, the two moving objects (MO) representing two people are having a quarrel. And the arrows of disagreement show that they are throwing words back and forth at each other. And the reason for the quarrel is the item located underneath with arrows coming from the two MOs, which represents the direction of intentions. And in “puzzle over”, an MO (representing a person) hops over certain items with similar shape (referring to similar problems) multiple times. It indicated that in “puzzle over”, there is a repeated confusion about similar problems.

The imagistic themes for tempo-spatial relationship, such as “quarrel over” and “puzzle over” in English, also contains hidden angels about how this event or movement is perceived, for instance, static or in motion, looking up or looking down, etc. And this

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10 Adapted from Radden (1985), p.196.
angel is equally critical to explain why the same motion has different linguistic representations in cross-cultural contexts.

A comprehensive study about image-based approach is conducted by Yufin Li in 2002. He proposed a Conceptual-Metaphor-and-Image-Schema-based (CM-IS-based) approach in his dissertation, *The Acquisition of Metaphorical Expressions, Idioms, and Proverbs by Chinese Learners of English: A Conceptual Metaphor and Image Schema Based Approach*. Li designed a linear sequence of how L2 learners should acquire conceptual metaphors, that is, “embodied experiences → image schemas → conceptual metaphors → linguistic expressions (including metaphorical expressions, idioms and proverbs).”¹¹

For instance, if one needs to learn the metaphorical expression *stomp out racism*, s/he should 1) at least have physically experienced treading heavily over a concrete item. Then this learner will be able to 2) imagine an image that racism is that concrete item on the ground to be treaded over. And, 3) to formulate a conceptual metaphor that *RACISM IS A (LOATH) ITEM ON THE GROUND*. The last step should be 4) to study (by means of memorization, instruction, testing, etc.) all linguistic expressions or extended usages similar to *stomp out racism*. For instance, *stomp out discrimination, stomp out hunger*, etc. The sequential order to learn *stomp out racism* is illustrated in Figure 6.

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2.3.4 An Evaluation of Current Approaches

All of these three approaches mentioned above will definitely help to develop different strategies in classroom instruction for conceptual and cultural metaphors. And they are not mutually exclusive. For instance, the usage-based approach can be easily added up to the frequency- or corpus-based one. It also can be combined with the image-based approach, if the items in source-target domains are specific enough. However, there are some limitations which deserve discussing.

First, it seems that all these approaches focus on the perspective of teaching, but the learning process and what L2 learners can do is somewhat missing. Underneath their propositions, there is an assumption that the term “acquisition” is mostly about teaching. For instance, Li’s dissertation (2002) collected questionnaires from four hundred Chinese students learning English metaphor, but it was designed to test the result or efficacy of
the image-based teaching method. In contrast, the actual learning process of L2 learners has rarely drawn the attention of these researchers.

Second, the learning process inferred from these approaches seems to be quite linear, simply “input → output”. If we take the four steps of Li’s design how L2 learners acquire conceptual metaphors as an example, this order has only one direction, and it ceases when the learners just encounter the linguistic expressions. It does not show what happens next. For instance, how learners view and reflect upon these metaphorical expressions, and how they apply them in real life other than in tests. Nor did these approaches discuss if these applications could be successfully accepted by the native speakers from the target culture.

Third, these three approaches are mostly designed to serve testing purpose, for instance, pre-testing, post-testing, or proficiency-related tests. But learners do not have access to specific information about how to improve themselves in the future, other than a sheet of score. Without specific feedback and comments for their performance, the space for learners’ self-improvement is severely narrowed.

Fourth, the instruction based on these approaches mainly focuses on conceptual metaphors in the target language. But how these metaphors would differ in various cultures is left without further discussion. For L2 learners of Chinese, it would be more beneficial if a comparative perspective can be added to reveal the cognitive differences between the target culture and their original one.

Overall, these approaches introduced above are very conductive, but it seems that they are prevalently a teacher-centered pedagogy in nature, as opposed to learner-
centered. Thus, this thesis will suggest more investigation into how L2 learners acquire cultural metaphors, for instance, in Chinese.
3.1 Why Learning is a Cycle?

In 2002, James Zull published *The Art of Changing the Brain*, in which he successfully integrated biological basis for learning and the design of the learning cycle. This book matches the ideas about learning cultural metaphors in three ways.

One, knowledge is based on our physical experience, which includes our biological structure and the events we experience in the world. Two, learning is not a simple “input→output” process, which is one directional and linear. Rather, it is a constant renewable cycle containing the exchange between new and old knowledge. It is cyclic and recursive. This cycle matches how metaphor transfers attributes between concreteness/familiarity and abstractness/novelty. And three, Zull’s research reveals that teaching should be based on students’ prior knowledge.

For L2 learners, their L1 knowledge would be the starting platform for teachers to work on. According to Tsui’s case study (2003) about expertise in teaching second language, novice teachers tend to closely follow rules and guidelines set up by superiors or authority in lesson planning, but expert teachers work more on students’ existing knowledge. Both Zull’s and Tsui’s studies support the tenet in this thesis that the acquisition of Chinese cultural metaphors should work on L2 learners’ prior knowledge. Without any knowledge of learners’ L1 background, it is difficult to integrate teaching
and learning together. For the usage-based, frequency-based, corpus-based, or CM-IS-based approaches discussed before, we can only see teachers’ input, but the learning mechanism for L2 learners is missing. Therefore, this thesis will adopt Zull’s learning cycle to suggest an additional approach for L2 learners’ acquisition of cultural metaphors.

3.2 Zull’s Learning Cycle

Zull notes that there are three major functions of the cerebral cortex of human beings, including:

1) Sensing. This term refers to the receipt of signals picked up by the sense organs from the outside world.

2) Integrating. This function is similar to an add-up process in which the individual signals will be recognized in the sum of all the other signals.

3) Motor. This word means the execution of those plans generated by the brain and body, or how the ideas are performed. (p. 15).

These three functions are also the very basic cognitive factors which influence the learning process. If we explore further, the human cerebral cortex can be sectioned into four different areas, such as occipital lobe, temporal lobe, frontal lobe, and parietal lobe. Each area is in charge of more complicated but quite distinctive cognitive functions, such as collecting information, integrating information, forming memory, and creating and executing ideas.

Therefore, the biological structure of the human brain somewhat determines how learning will happen. Based on the discovery of human anatomy and cognitive science,
Zull designed a new figure to explain what the distinctive phases of learning are and how learning should be happening in a cyclic pattern, rather than a linear one as in “input ➔ output”.

So far, we have come to a hypothesized figure where the learning cycle matches the information process in the cerebral cortex. If we remove the brain structure from the figure, we will get another one which clearly depicts the cycle and steps of learning.

Figure 7. Learning Cycle Based on Cerebral Structure

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12 This figure is from Zull (2002), p. 18.
The learning cycle in Figure 8 suggests that the initial stage of learning is not the preaching from the instructor. Rather, it comes from learners’ own concrete experience. For instance, it would be sound or visual input. In the case of L2 learners’ acquisition of Chinese cultural metaphors, the learning cycle suggests that learners should start with some concrete cases of Chinese metaphors, either from the instructor if they are too implicit, but better from learners’ own exposure to the Chinese language and own identification of the examples.

And the second phase is for the collected signals to go through a rough integrative process which mainly focuses on the observation and reflection. For instance, L2 learners in this stage should: 1) Observe how Chinese metaphors are used, and think about what the entities are, or to think about which entity has more concrete or familiar attributes, and which has more abstract or novel ones. 2) It will also help if the learners can compare

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13 http://ie.sdsmt.edu/FirstYear/Kolb.htm.
the equivalent metaphors in their L1 or C1 (first culture) knowledge. An effective reflection is to discover the differences of the metaphorical usage in both L2 and L1. 3) Another organic part of reflection includes remembering related words, images, expressions, or ideas. So memorization should take place in this phase.

The third stage of learning is to formulate abstract concepts or hypotheses based on learners’ observation and reflection. This is a further step of integration. L2 learners of Chinese can formulate abstract patterns, for instance, A IS B, or draw out what constitute the constraints for the usage of cultural metaphors in Chinese language. These ideas are new to L2 learners, and awaiting to be tested in new situations.

The last step of learning is to actively test the newly generated abstract ideas or plans. In terms of testing, L2 learners of Chinese will speak out, write down, or even perform (in skits, in interpersonal kinesthetic interactions) these newly grasped metaphorical expressions in various new situations to examine if their own formulation is correct or not. In this stage, instructors play a crucial role to provide feedback, comments, or assistance to help one single learning cycle to be completed. But the learning cycle does not stop here. Another learning cycle will soon commence for more new concrete experience based on the previous one.

In short, Zull’s idea about the learning process is based on biological mechanism about how learning can possibly happen step by step. Furthermore, it is focused on what learners can do, instead of what teachers can do. Zull’s study can greatly contribute to how L2 learners acquire Chinese metaphors. But what Chinese instructors can actually do to fit in such a dynamic process?
3.3 The Teacher’s Role in the Learning Cycle

The general principle of the teacher’s role is that it should match the learning cycle. Teachers should give timely and appropriate assistance in various stages, but not to contradict the learning cycle. In learning Chinese metaphors, when L2 learners first meet a new metaphoric expression, they will naturally feel uncertain and anxious. Chinese instructor’s can step in and give limited support to reduce their anxiety which might exert negative effects toward learning, or give source information about how and where to collect metaphors. But preaching from the instructor about the usage or explicit instruction should be discouraged in this initial stage, because it will interrupt the following phases of the learning cycle.

In the second stage, learners start to observe the patterns of cultural metaphors. Interest spurs them to reflect on the differences between the cultural metaphor in L2 and its equivalent usage in L1. In this stage, teachers should step out and let learners be in charge of the learning process. In the third stage, learners might be puzzled by the complexity of cultural metaphors when they try to formulate hypotheses about the patterns and constraints of the usage. Instructors can step in again at this stage and provide some help about learning strategies to solve the doubts. At the integrative stage, the help from instructors is still limited.

At the last stage, learners are looking for opportunities to actively test their hypotheses about Chinese cultural metaphors. Thus, teachers are very important in terms of designing the learning environment, and providing context or props to facilitate
learning. For instance, teachers can design a writing task, a theme, or a topic that learners can elaborate on by applying the learnt metaphor. Furthermore, it is important for teachers to give feedback, comments, and evaluation to confirm learners’ success or encourage them to make readjustment. Without teacher’s feedback, the learning cycle is incomplete, because students are still unsure if their abstract hypotheses are correct or not.

Nonetheless, if we look at the figure below about the teacher’s role in a learning cycle, an obvious feature is that learners are always in the center of the learning cycle, but not teachers. Teachers provide assistance and feedback only when they are needed. But most of the time, learners take charge of learning process for themselves. If the design of the curriculum is learner-centered, then the instructor’s role should match the dynamic learning cycle.
3.4 The Teaching Cycle

Based on the four phases of the learning cycle and the teacher’s role in each phase in the case of acquiring Chinese cultural metaphors, this thesis also suggests that there should be a corresponding cycle for teaching (Figure 10).

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14 This modified figure was adapted from the one designed by Zhini Zeng in a seminar presentation. Here I would like to show my great appreciation for her work.
A teaching cycle should at least include four stages. The first stage is that the teacher should collect data, visual aids, or multimedia files, and also make plans about how to use the information to enhance learning. For instance, teachers can collect various usages of cultural metaphors in different situations. This stage matches the first phase of the learning cycle, Concrete Experience. But this stage can also be stretched out and even cover the second and third phases in the learning cycle, Reflection and Abstraction.

Next, after students have some reflections and hypotheses on the usage of the cultural metaphors, instructors can act like directors to design appropriate and authentic

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Figure 10 was adapted from http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/consistent_teacher/tlcycle.htm.
cultural contexts, to provide props for classroom practices, and to let students actively testing their abstract ideas. The second stage of the teaching cycle exactly matches the fourth phase in the learning cycle, that is, Active Testing.

The third stage for teaching is to assess and record students’ classroom practices in order to generate constructive evaluation in the last stage for learners’ improvement. Without the feedback, the learning cycle is incomplete to the students. For the same reason, the teaching cycle must include reporting with feedback. Table 2 represents how the learning cycle and teaching cycle overlaps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Cycle</th>
<th>Teaching Cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1. Concrete Experience</td>
<td>Stage 1. Planning and Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2. Observance and Reflection</td>
<td>Stage 2. Classroom Practicing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3. Abstraction and Hypothesis</td>
<td>Stage 3. Assessing and Recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 4. Active Testing</td>
<td>Stage 4. Reporting with Feedback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Relationship between the Learning and Teaching Cycles

Similarly, in the teaching cycle, explicit instruction is not encouraged. Teachers’ support should be distributed in classroom practices, assessing, and providing feedback.

3.5 Working on Learners’ Previous Knowledge

According to Zull, learning is always based upon learners’ previous knowledge. In the acquisition of Chinese cultural metaphors, L2 learners’ previous knowledge mostly comes from L1 knowledge. And the ultimate goal of L2 learners is to gain or to form new knowledge (L2 knowledge) via learning Chinese cultural metaphors. In doing so, a task
for teachers is that they should also be familiar with L2 learners’ background knowledge. In this case, instructors who teach Chinese cultural metaphors must also have some ideas about how the conceptual metaphors work in learners’ L1 knowledge.

Furthermore, based on L2 learners’ previous knowledge, instructors can program how to teach Chinese cultural metaphors step by step.

1. To recognize and select elements that can set up connections between old and new knowledge. For instance, if L2 learners are going to learn a cultural metaphor RAGE IS FIRE in Chinese, their own physical experience with fire could always be a good start to sparkle learners’ interest. And this matches the first phase of the learning cycle, Concrete Experience.

2. To establish connections between old and new knowledge. Learners can first
prepare some expressions containing this conceptual metaphor in both L1 and L2, for instance, in Chinese and in English, one can say “He whipped that horse in a rage” or “He whipped that horse with rage”. But in Chinese, its equivalents would be:

(15) 他怒火中烧，猛力鞭马。
_Ta nuhuo zhongshao, mengli bianma._
He rage-fire-inside-burn, violent-strength whip horse
He whipped the horse with great rage.

(16) 他狂怒之下，猛力鞭马。
_Ta zai kuangnu zhixia, mengli bianma._
He BE crazy-rage-underneath, violent-strength whip horse
He whipped the horse with great rage.

According to Zull, comparison and memory take place at this phase. Learners should be encouraged to observe and reflect on the differences or patterns between L1 and L2. In English, RAGE could be either a CONTAINER or COMPANY. In Chinese, RAGE is spatially located either inside human body or above, and it is not conceptualized as COMPANION in English. This matches the second and third stage of the learning cycle, Observation and Abstraction.

3. To facilitate the integration of knowledge. Instructors should design various authentic tasks, either in writing or speaking, to let students test or even perform their abstract hypotheses. For instance, to design a skit about an upscale conflict between roommates. And in the end, teachers provide comments and feedback. This fits in the last phase, Active Testing.

4. Create new knowledge. When a learning cycle is complete, new knowledge about
how to use cultural metaphors in Chinese is generated. And L2 learners’ old knowledge about RAGE is also renewed.

3.6 “Warming Up the Old to Know the New”

Metaphor works as a medium to transfer familiarity to novelty. However, the dichotomy between familiarity and novelty is not absolutely non-negotiable. If we use the cyclic view to interpret metaphor, we will get a new picture that novelty and familiarity is constantly in revolution. And here “revolution” means turning back to the origin.

Confucius once mentioned that 溫故而知新 wengu er zhixin (“Warming up the old to know the new”). This ancient Chinese axiom implies that, in the end of a certain learning cycle, the new knowledge from the outside world will ideally renew the old inside. However, the once-new knowledge from outside world will also become inside “familiar newness or strangeness” through the process of integration (memory, reflection and hypothesis). In the end, the old knowledge collapses, and does not exist any more. And learners’ previous old knowledge at the beginning of this learning cycle is renewed. The once “old knowledge” is not old any more. Rather, it becomes “new familiarity” based on what has been integrated from the outside world.
In this cycle, learners get familiar with the new and strange usage of cultural-specific metaphor via reflective observation and active hypothesis. The “alieness” is reduced bit by bit, and the unfamiliar metaphor is gradually internalized into L2 learners’ cognitive system. Eventually, it becomes an organic piece. When the learning cycle is complete, the old familiarity is refreshed as “new familiarity”.

Wu (2001: 206) described the process in that “[k]nowing something new means initially to understand, to digest, the strange in terms of the familiar, bit by bit…as I
digest the strangely new into my old, my familiar old comes to be gradually ‘digested’ by
the new now turned strangely familiar.”

In this sense, metaphor revolves around novelty and familiarity. And the four
phases of the learning cycle also connects novelty and familiarity in a cyclic fashion. In
the first phase, when learners are gathering cultural metaphors from concrete experience,
their knowledge about these metaphorical expressions is still new. Through careful
observation and reflection, the once-strange usages become more familiar but still distant.
When learners get more familiar with the usage, patterns, or constraints of the metaphor
from the target cultural, they need to apply them and actively test their ideas. With the
feedback or comments from the teachers, the new metaphor is acquired into learners’
cognition. Thus, the familiar old knowledge is renewed.

However, as the old knowledge is renewed into “novel familiarity”, it seems that
sometimes it is part of the nature of metaphor that it creates differences or deviates from
cultural conventions. Based on case studies, the last chapter will discuss the creative
usage of advanced L2 learners of Chinese, and the factors which might influence the
acceptance of the creative usage will be discussed, such as learners’ background
knowledge, contextual allowance, or cultural permissibility.
4.1 What is Novel Metaphor?

4.1.1 Distinguish Creativity, Innovation, and Novelty

These three terms all contain the meaning of “newness”. However, “creativity” refers to the quality based on the activity of “creation”. The latter refers to making “new” things out of non-existence. For instance, the word “creator” refers to someone who is able to fabricate concrete items or abstract entities out of nothing. In addition, creativity reflects people’s competence, that is embodied in the activity of creation. And it reflects certain social values through the process of creation.

The origin of the word “innovation” comes from Latin innovatus, and it meaning “to renew or change”. It contains the implication to make old things refreshed. It emphasizes the action of “renew (being new again)” or process of changing per se. And “innovation” is more related to the growth in industry, markets, technology, etc.\(^{16}\)

Novelty refers to the quality or state of being new, unusual, or rare. It is rarely applied to people. Thus, we can comment on a person by saying that “He is very creative”, but it is not common to say “He is very novel.” It less reflects social value, but more resides in the subjective judgment of individuals.\(^{17}\)

In this thesis, the terms “novel usage” and “creative usage” are interchangeable.

\(^{16}\) http://socialwizz.com/?p=4744.
\(^{17}\) http://www.babylon.com/definition/novelty/English.
And “novelty” in metaphor refers to new knowledge, as opposed to “familiarity”. In L2 learners’ acquisition of cultural metaphor, the term “creativity” refers to: 1) L2 learners compose new metaphorical expressions which do not exist in target language or culture before; and 2) L2 learners apply existing culture metaphors in situations which are unusual or untypical for native speakers.

4.1.2 Three Levels of Creativity in Metaphors

Some researchers maintain that creativity in metaphorical usage is not a quantifiable entity, but a continuum. Thus, they suggest dividing the creativity of metaphor into three levels, based on the productivity of the metaphor itself. The term “productivity” refers to the possibility or the number of variations that a metaphor can produce.

These three levels are: 1) Highly productive level. The more linguistic expressions that concept has from source domains, the more highly productive the metaphor is. 2) Semi-productive level. This level includes idiomatic expressions motivated by semi-productive themes. And the freedom for the idiomatic expressions to deviate is limited. The creativity in this level is “transparent”. 3) Nonproductive level. The idiomatic expressions are in fixed semantics, almost like “dead”, thus they are the most nonproductive. Thus, they are “opaque”, and do not allow deviation or variation. In English, for example, “kick the bucket” (talking about death), and “by and large” (talking about something in general) are fixed expressions. And there is not much creativity left in these expressions. The meaning of these expressions cannot be literally drawn the surface.
In Chinese, the cases are “丢脸” (diulian: “to lose face”, to forfeit respect from other people), and “保留面子” (baoliu mianzi: “save face”, to preserve the dignity). Even though dignity is like a property that can be lost or saved, the productivity of this expression is greatly limited (Clausner and Croft 1997: 247).

4.1.3 Stances towards Novel Metaphor

There have been two distinctive attitudes towards the novel usage in metaphor. Lakoff (2008) sought to principles (for instance, invariance principle) and even neuronal nodes to look for certain factors which can precisely activate a conceptual metaphor. Similarly, other researchers suggest that by constructing extremely detailed image-based themes, it might eventually unravel the mysterious metaphors (Woll, 1985).

However, Wu criticizes that Lakoff’s later proposal seems to be very “constipated”, because metaphor’s primary function, in his perspective, is to carry new meaning into old knowledge. And he further defends the paradox “ambiguity” which has caused headache to many cognitive linguists. Wu suggested that there is no need worry about the challenge of precision in metaphor, because the very beauty of metaphor exactly lies in its lack of predictability and precision. If such a principle were ever found to prevent ambiguity in metaphor, Wu would refuse to name it “metaphor” any more. It turns out to be simply “parrot-learning” (pp. 60-67).

Indeed, an important task for the educator is to maintain learners’ curiosity about the unknown and constant arousal of interest. However, as far as L2 learners of Chinese are concerned, they are constantly faced with confusion when they try to apply cultural
metaphors in various situations, but their creative usage is rejected from time to time. It seems some creative usage would be easier to be accepted if the creation is regarded to be produced by native speakers, as opposed to be L2 learners. So how to handle the linguistic creativity in L2 learning in the case of cultural metaphor?

4.2 Case Study of Novel Usage by Advanced L2 Learners of Chinese

4.2.1 Introducing Advanced Learners’ Language Performance Portfolio System (ALLPPS) ¹⁸

The Advanced Learners’ Language Performance Portfolio System (ALLPPS) presents a feasible way to observe the metaphorical expressions produced and used in formal writing by advanced L2 learners of Chinese. These learners were admitted to Chinese Flagship Program at The Ohio State University between 2005-2010. And their age ranges from 22-27. Most of the learners have been studying Chinese for 3-5 years (in USA and overseas). In the study, all their names and identifiable information will be deleted to protect person privacy.

The metaphorical expressions come from the 10 essays written by these learners, and the length of these essays ranges from 1 page to 4 pages. All these essays were composed by using computers. The topics cover these following areas and fields:

1) The difficulty that you have encountered in the process of learning Chinese language.

¹⁸ The website for ALLPS is http://140.254.66.174/alpps_new/index.php. Last time visited on August 3rd, 2011. The data collection was approved by IRB office at The Ohio State University on August 11th, 2011.
2) What is the most useful media to study Chinese language or to understand Chinese culture.

3) Marriage consulting in China nowadays.


5) Internet development in China.

6) The motivation to choose Chinese as major and specialization.

7) The Rising of local enterprises in China.

8) The recent development of psychotherapy in China.

9) Hydraulic engineering projects in China.

10) Real estate market in major cities in China.

Most of these essays submitted to ALLPPS were reviewed first by their language instructors or tutors at the Chinese Flagship Program. These tutors and language instructors are native speakers of Chinese, and are highly educated. Since these essays were reviewed before the submission, it is likely that the mistakes were corrected. Still, some novel or not-so-native-like metaphorical expressions were left in these essays, including successful and unsuccessful usage. All these metaphors will be picked out and analyzed.

In addition, this investigation into the cultural metaphors of advanced Chinese L2 learners focuses on verb-noun collocations. The reasons are: 1) Based upon the empirical nature of metaphors, the physical experience is mostly reflected in actions and performances. Different verbs always contain various body positions, movement, angels, directions, results, etc. 2) Nouns are the concepts syntactically structured to “designate
different semantic roles”. For instance, 小明读书 Xiao Ming du shu (Xiao Ming reads the book). In that sentence, Xiao Ming is the AGENT, and shu is the PATIENT. 3) In Chinese, new concepts can be morphologically created from verbs and adjectives by means of suffixes, for instance, du (to read) > duzhe (reader), zuo (to write) > zuozhe (writer), kuan (wide) > kuandu (width), liang (bright) > liangdu (brightness), etc. (McDonough 1993: 139; Clair, 2002). Examination of verb-noun collocations will help to reveal the metaphorical relationship between the AGENT and PATIENT in motion.

4.2.2 Data Analysis of Novel Metaphors

4.2.2.1. Influence of L1 Knowledge

In search of the characteristics of linguistic creativity, researchers found that it is “redefined as the power to combine a given set of elements in accord with a given system or set of rules in order to get a ‘new’ structure.” (McDonough: 139) In the case of L2 learners’ creation of novel metaphors, their prior L1 knowledge plays a significant role in this process. Some of the cultural metaphors in their mother tongue, namely English, was directly combined with Chinese. For native speakers, these expressions are very novel or uncommon. In the formal writing in ALLPPS, there are several cases of verb-noun metaphorical collocations are very novel in Chinese, but the linguistic root can be traced back in English. For instance,

(17) 媒体 可以 拥抱 这个 计划。
Meiti keyi yongbao zhege jihua.
Media AUX embrace DEM Plan.
Media can embrace this plan.
(18) 中国 政府 提了很多 年 的 禁令。
Zhongguo zhengfu ti le henduo nian de jinling.
Chinese government lift PAR many years POS forbidden order.
Chinese government lifted the ban which had lasted many years.

(19) 我 在 追求 外交 方面 的 工作。
Wo zai zhuiqiu waijiao fangmian de gongzuo.
I COV chase diplomat aspect POS job.
I am looking for jobs in foreign ministry.

(20) 中国 媒体会 成为 比较 开放，慢慢 接受 比较 多自由。
Zhongguo meiti hui chengwei bijiao kaifang, manman jieshou bijiao duo ziyou.
Chinese media will become relatively open, slowly accept relatively many freedom.
Chinese media will become comparatively open, gradually accepting comparatively more freedom.

(21) 一般 来说，我 支持 美国 的媒体自由。
Yiban laishuo, wo zhichi meiguo de meiti ziyou.
Generally come say, I support America POS freedom.
Generally speaking, I support media freedom in the USA.

In the verb-noun expressions above, yongbao jihua (embrace the plan), ti jinling (lift the ban), zhuiqiu gongzuo (pursue jobs), jieshou ziyou (accept freedom), and zhichi ziyou (support freedom) are very novel metaphorical expression written in Chinese.

However, if we analyze further, these metaphors are literal translations from learners’ L1 English background, and currently these metaphorical compounds are not permissible in Chinese yet.

For the concept of jihua (plan) in Chinese culture, it is more like the internal upper structure (beams, eaves, rafters, etc) in a CONSTRUCTION which needs to be supported. In English, the PATIENT plan can be conceptualized as a corporeal entity to
be hugged, such as tree, friends, etc. Also, jinling (forbidden order) has been conceptualized as a gigantic impediment in traffic. It cannot be bypassed (raoguo) or overridden (kuaguo), but can only be removed manually (quxiao). However, in the learner’s mind, the typical image for a ban might still resembles a bar which only needs to be lifted. In (3), the conceptualization for chances and opportunities in English is they are the objects someone can chase after. However, in Chinese, it is a missing item one needs to look for 寻求 (xunqiu). A difference between zhuiqiu and xunqiu is that one usually chases something which is more definite and clear as target. But the object one needs to look for is either missing or unclear. For instance, in zhuiqiu aiqing (to chase love), this “love” is more definite and affirmative. But in xunqiu aiqing (to look for love), the object is vague and unsure. In (20) and (21), the PATIENT “freedom” in English can be treated as a real entity to be taken, accepted, or as part of a building to be supported. But in Chinese expression, the concepts conveyed underneath are yet to be accepted.

In this sense, these cases are novel and very creative in Chinese, but they can only be regarded as filtration from L1 knowledge. Learners have not really started to the learning cycle to grasp the cultural specific concepts referring to jiahua, jinling, and zhuiqiu, and ziyou.
4.2.2.2. Contextual Allowance

Some scholars might argue that it is because learners are unfamiliar with the novel metaphors that these creative usages are less likely to be accepted or understood. Again, based on Levorator’s study (1993), the degree of familiarity with these expressions *per se* is not the necessary or sufficient reason to determine a novel metaphor to be accepted or understood. In her study, two groups of children (7-year- and 10-year-old) were asked to read new idiomatic expressions. One group of expressions was put in story as context, but the other control group had no context for the same expressions. In the result, the percentage for the idiomatic expressions to be understood in context is much higher than the one in control group for both 7-year-old and 10-year-old children. Here is an example used in Levorator’s study (1993: 101-120).

(22) A little boy names Paul moved to another town. It was winter so he had to change school. His mother suggested that he should try and get to know his new schoolmates. Once at school he lent them his crayons and that helped to break the ice.

What did Paul do when he broke the ice?
(a) He made friends with his schoolmates.
(b) He broke a piece of ice.
(c) He told his mummy everything.

In general, language learners would found it easier to comprehend or accept an unfamiliar or novel metaphor if provided with situation context. It might be the same for native Chinese speakers to comprehend or accept unfamiliar or novel metaphors created by L2 learners. This could be a general strategy for advanced L2 learners of Chinese in acquisition of Chinese cultural metaphors, because “[a]n account of human intelligence requires an account of our intelligent integration with our context (McDonough, 1993).
In terms of context, cultural metaphor has both positive and negative usage. For instance, in the English metaphorical expression “stomp out racism”, the object “racism” carries negative meaning. But the verb carries a positive and firm tone in English. In contrast, the equivalent expression for “stomp out” 践踏 jianta in Chinese can only be combined with positive nouns to convey a negative meaning as a whole collocation. For instance, 践踏人权 jianta renquan (“stomp out human rights”), 践踏尊 践踏尊 jianta zunyan (“stomp out dignity”). Here, 人权 renquan (“human rights”) and 尊 尊 jianta zunyan (“dignity”) contain positive meaning. But the whole verb-noun collocations contain negative meaning. Thus, the affective stances for stomp out are quite different in Chinese and English, even though the expression “stomp out” originates from the same bodily movement.

Similarly, the context for linguistic creativity also refers to playful or humorous usage as opposed to the same expressions used in formal situations (Tin, 2010). For instance, the metaphor jiaojin naozhi (squeeze-finish-one’s-brain-juice: rack one’s brain out) refers to exhaust one’s intelligence to solve an extremely difficult task. And cultural metaphor in Chinese is INTEGELLIGENCE IS A MACHINE. But it would be humorous for L2 learners to apply it in a situation for them to explain their failure or stupidity when trying very hard to solve a very simple task, such as 1+1=2. Thus the context changes from a formal and serious one into its opposite side, playful, relaxing, and humorous. This usage could also be considered novel, because the second context is much less frequently used, and different from its original context.
4.2.2.3 Some Pragmatic Constraints

Can linguistic creativity go beyond pragmatics? Fellbaum (1993) investigates the determiners in idiomatic expressions in English, for instance, the, a/an, and zero determiner. And her study shows that the idiomatic expressions which contain definite determiner the are more inflexible than the ones with indefinite determiner a/an. And the expressions with zero determiner, or bare nouns, are mostly asyntactic, thus highly frozen. For example,

(23) After dinner, John hit decided to hit the road.
(24) After dinner, John hit decided to hit that old road again.

These idiomatic expressions with definite determiner “the” above have certain freedom to be compositional. Thus, the metaphorical meaning in “the old road again” is still preserved. But in the expressions with indefinite determiner, a or an, the metaphorical meaning are likely to reduce, and literal meaning will increase. For instance,

(25) Please do not make a scene here.
(26) Please do not make a specific/big/expensive scene here.

For bare nouns, the idiomatic expressions are almost frozen and inflexible. And these expressions have the least freedom to change. For instance,

(27) The salesman started to talk turkey.
(28) The salesman started to talk wild/red turkey.
The case in (28) has completely lost its metaphorical meaning. Only literary meaning is contained in that sentence. And the correct sentence grammar should also be “talk about wild/red turkeys” (pp. 280-290).

Another implication that can be inferred from this study is when the flexibility of idiomatic expressions, such as lexical substitution, passivization, etc., is also subject to syntax An example in Chinese can demonstrate that grammar will also impose some limits on the novel usage of metaphors. For instance, the word love can be both a verb and noun. So people can 爱拥抱 ai yongbao ("love to embrace"), or metaphorically 拥抱爱 yongbao ai “embrace the love”. But one cannot say *拥抱喜欢 *yongbao xihuan “*embrace ‘like’”, because xihuan “like” can only function as a verb, not a noun in Chinese. Thus, these two verbs are not completely replaceable in a novel usage.19

Furthermore, in Chinese language, especially in the formal writing, the balance of syllables and prosody also play a critical role. In the metaphorical expression 爱拥抱 ai yongbao, if the verb is monosyllabic, then the noun can be one syllable or more. However, if the verb is disyllabic, then the noun should be matching up as well, in order to maintain prosodic balance. Thus, even though 拥抱爱 yongbao ai “embrace the love” is syntactically correct, 拥抱爱情 yongbao aiqing would be more prosodically appropriate.

For advanced L2 learners of Chinese, in the example of (17), the register for yongbao is very formal with certain literary grace, but bao is colloquial and plain, even though both share the English meaning “hug” and “embrace”. If the PATIENT in the sentence is an abstract noun, then yongbao is more frequently used. Such as 拥抱梦想

19 The symbol “*” indicates unacceptable usage.
yongbao mengxiang (“embrace the dream”). In the case (18), ti jinling (lift the ban) is less acceptable without directional complement 起 qi (“up”). All these pragmatic factors, although very trivial in details, would eventually contribute to the acceptance for novel metaphors created by L2 learners in Chinese.

4.2.2.4 Successful Cases

Even though it is very challenging to creative metaphorical usage, there are examples of advanced L2 learners at the Flagship Chinese Program to demonstrate that they successfully acquired the cultural metaphors in Chinese and used them in a novel way.

(29) 三个方面帮助湖南电视台达到成功。
Sange fangmian fangzhu Hunan dianshitai dadao chenggong.
Three CL aspects help Hunan TV station reach success.
These three aspects helped Hunan TV station to achieve success.

Normally in Chinese, SUCCESS is conceptualized as an item for people to reach. And the verb should be 取得 qude (“get”). 达到 dadao often pairs up with the noun 目的 mudi (“goal”). But the learner imagined SUCCESS IS A DESINATION, so “to reach the destination” was mapped onto the target of “to achieve success”. In this case, it is novel but acceptable.

(30) 中国媒体想推进解决社会问题。
Zhongguo meiti xiang tuijin jiejue shuihui wenti.
Chinese media want to push-forward solve social problems.
Chinese media wish to accelerate the steps to solve social problems.
In (30), this learner wanted to use the concept of “accelerate” in English. And the conceptualization for this learner might be that social problems are IMPEDIMENTS, and Chinese media can solve them by pushing them forward. This expression is based on our shared physical experience, for instance, pushing a car forward. Thus, this creation is acceptable as well.

4.3 Cultural Permissibility

Cultural metaphor in language acquisition is a relatively new research topic. And linguistic creation for idiomatic expression in L2 is even less explored. Researchers on this topic would generally agree that there are a number of factors determining the acceptance of the novel usage created by L2 learners, such as normativity, individuality, degree of freedom or flexibility, responsibility, awareness, etc. (McDonough, 151). But one should also take “cultural permissibility” into consideration.

In the exploration of the topic “creativity”, cognitive scientists discovered that “creativity is essentially a social act…we need other people to determine what is novel.” (Weisberg, 2010) But what is the standard for “other people” to determine a social act “novel” or not in this statement above? Weisberg holds that in all so-called “creative” social activities, cultural value in a given society invariably “plays a critical role in the creator’s success as a communicator.” (p. 237).

Furthermore, some psychologists will contend that learning is “a continuous discernment and accumulation of confirmed expectations.” The result or production of learning must meet certain expectations, social or historical. Because all societies have
unique belief systems and habitual practices, some cultural dogmas might impede the process of life-long learning, but also imposing judgment, sometimes very irrational, upon the members from the other groups. Therefore, learning and knowledge are double-sided swords. On the one hand, they can liberate and improve individuals and societies. On the other hand, learning doctrinaire knowledge will narrow one’s and society’s perspective and inhibit their capacity to adapt to varying situations (Atafori, 2006).

In an unpublished experiment designed by Dr. Walker, he asked the native speakers/readers of Chinese in Taiwan to revise two versions of a map description with the same content: one was handwritten by a L2 learner, and the other was composed on a computer and printed out. Invariably, the handwritten version with identifiable information of non-nativeness was revised more often by Chinese native speakers/readers (Zhang 2003:15-16).

A similar study was conducted by Zhang (2003), in which four printed and handwritten Chinese compositions were evaluated in rotation by Chinese native speakers. Again, all these compositions were created by L2 learners. And the results show that “that the presentation modes significantly or importantly affect the evaluation by the readers, and in general, the printed version of the composition is more preferred by the native speakers of Chinese.” (ii).

In terms of creative usage of cultural metaphors, there exists different degree of permissibility between native speakers and L2 learners, which reflects a cultural attitude that one’s own culture is superior to others. Specifically, the novel metaphors created by native speakers would be easier to gain recognition, but more difficult to be admitted if
they are created by L2 learners. And as the very first evaluators of learners’ creative usage, language instructors might convey their implicit expectations by accepting it or rejecting it.

An example can be raised here for the leaning of the sentence pattern “寓 A 于 B 之中”(yu A yu B zhizhong: put A into B) for L2 learners. The character 寓 resembles an empty house, indicating one can put an abstract item A into B. This sentence pattern contains more complex metaphors. Item B represents an empty building or a container. Item A is conceptualized as a smaller entity which can be placed into the space of Item B. This expression is highly productive for native Chinese speakers. Almost any abstract nouns can be placed in this metaphorical pattern in Chinese. For instance,

(31) 寓管理 于 服务 之中
Yu guanli yu fuwu zhizhong
put management PREP service within.
combine management with customer service.

(32) 寓 情感 于 销售 之中
Yu qinggan yu yingxiao zhizhong
put passion PREP sales within.
combine passion and feeling with sales.

(33) 寓诗词歌赋于 刀光 剑影 之中
Yu shicigefu yu daoguang jianying zhizhong
put poem lyric song prose PREP knife light sword shadow within.
combine elegant artistic taste with physical danger and violence.

All these variations above come from the prototypical expressions 寓教于乐 yujiao yule (“put education into entertainment”: combine education and entertainment) and 寓情于景 yuqing yujing (“put feelings into scenes”: combine one’s own feelings
with the environment). And these variations were created and have been accepted by native speakers of Chinese.

However, it is still very challenging for L2 learners to create an acceptable metaphorical expression even by imitating the pattern without being rejected by the languages instructors as the first evaluators of “nativeness”. These following two expressions were marked as being problematic by the language instructors.

(34) 寓 自由与 独立于写作 之中
Yu ziyou yu duli yu xiezuo zhizhong
put freedom and independence PREP writing within combine freedom and independence with writing

(35) 寓 批评政治于社会革命 之中
Yu piping zhengzhi shehui geming zhizhong
put political criticism PREP social revolution within combine political criticism with social revolution

In (34) and (35), these metaphor expressions created by the L2 learners are very rare in terms of frequency in Chinese language. But they both conform to the linguistic and cognitive constraints. Nevertheless, neither gained permissibility from the instructors. These novel expressions might be acceptable by other native speakers if the L2 learners’ identifiable background is removed. From another angle, it seems that cultural metaphors with higher degree of formality or with more historical contextualization, such as “yu A yu B zhizhong”, tend to have lower degree of cultural permissibility in terms of L2 creativity, because the underlying assumption is that only native speakers can have the

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These two cases were my own personal experience when teaching at Harvard-Beijing Academy in 2007. Names and identifiable information was removed.
exclusive access to classic or formal Chinese.

Cultural permissibility constitutes a paradox for the acquisition of Chinese idiomatic expressions. It is also a bottleneck for the linguistic creativity of advanced L2 learners. Individual L2 learners themselves wish to “participate in the free production of the very future culture by reference to which their own present creative linguistic activities” (McDonough, 151). However, their production has limited access to the linguistic market for free exchange, or the quality and ownership of their production are questioned during the exchange. The underlying attitude of cultural permissibility in language education is deeply hidden. So far, little research has been done to reveal this cultural attitude and behavior in L2 education. The study of cultural permissibility in L2 acquisition is an urgent project. Otherwise, the acquisition of cultural metaphor as formulaic expressions by advanced L2 learners might be compromised.
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