A study of the influence of Shona Semi-metaphoric phrases on the Acquisition of Chinese language

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Abstract
Shona is a language rich in metaphoric expression which are used in daily conversations.This study will focus on what we called "semi-metaphoric phrases". We claim that Shona semi-metaphoric phrases are even more pervasive and moredeeply absorbed into the pure language, and have "week"metaphoric power which subsequently result in them being frequently directly translated to Chinese (or other languages). This study proposes that the diversified nature of Shona semi-metaphoric phrases gives rise to a multiple-option phrasing. This phenomena creates a phraseology imbalance between L1 and L2, whereby L1 has several optional phrasings, but which are not semantically correct in L2. This imbalance increases the chances of making errors.

Keywords: Shona; Chinese; metaphors ; semi-metaphors;

1. Introduction

Lakoff and Johnson in Luseko and Kapfupi（2014:107）expounded that, metaphor is present everywhere in everyday life not only in language but also in thought or action, that is to say, "our ordinary conceptual system in terms of which we both think and act is fundamentally metaphoric in nature". Mberi (2003) has also observed and commented on the pervasive nature of Shona metaphors.

There are cases whereby Chinese and Shona can express metaphors in the similar ways. In view of this, Kovecsesc cf (2002: 171) asserts that, it is possible for different languages and cultures to conceptualize certain phenomena in similar ways because of the universal aspects of the [human body]. Chinese and Shona cultures have similar ideas about the world around them and share the same experiences and processes in given situations. There are important resemblances that stem in part from diffusion (itself evidence of successful intercultural communication) and in part from the fact that all cultures are built round biological, psychological and social characteristics common to all kinds." Machakanja (2006:2). Hoijer also argued that, "no culture iswholly isolated, self-contained andunique.

However, Shona and Chinese are totally different languages which are spoken by societies with a huge cultural gap characterized by differences in worldviews. There can be significant variations in terms of daily experiences; ideologies; and historical background and beliefs. These factor influence language societies in expressing metaphors differently.

In order to to clarify thestudy object of the research, we will specially divide metaphoric phased into two main categories, namely "full metaphoric phrases" and "semi-metaphoric phrases". Full metaphoric phrases are thosewith both lexical items possessingmetaphoric meaning, while semi-metaphoric phrases will refer to those with only one lexical item used metaphorically. With regard to this, Cai Jigang(2008:100) once commented that, "An single lexical item and be a metaphor ".

Dirven in (Mberi,2003:75) classified metaphors according to their levels of linguistic structure,as shown in table 1 below

   Table 1:

		Type of Metaphor
phono	logy	sound metaphor
lexi	s	word metaphor
synt	ax	phrase metaphor
dis	course	discourse metaphor
morpholog	semantics	

Source: Dirven (1985: 88)

The present study will focusing only on the *word metaphors.* It is hence beyond the core task of the present study to discuss all the metaphor linguistic levels above. This study will specifically focusing on the **V+N and N+V semi-metaphoric phrases** only. We suggest that this type metaphoric phrase is deeply hidden in the everyday common language, to an extend that they seem to have been readily accepted as formal language, and to that end speakers use them unconsciously. Thus Lakoff and Turner（1989:iv）put it cross, " metaphor is a tool so ordinary that we use it unconsciously and automatically, with so little effort that we hardly notice it. It is omnipresent: metaphor suffuses our thoughts, no matter what we are thinking about."For instance, *"gera musoro"* (shear the head) *or "gera vanhu"*(clipping people) is frequently used phrase in Shona formal writing, yet strict speaking it has a metaphoric sense, because what we shear is the hair not the head. The *Duramazwi:Shona -English Dictionary* provides a sentence *"ane bhizimisi regugera vanhu"* (He runs the business for clipping/shearing people)(P67) . This study will treat such phases as being metaphoric in nature because, in the example, what is actually clipped in the hair, so whole human body has been used metaphorically to represent the hair. As can be seen in the above example that, in English it sounds strange to say *"i am going to have my head cut"* but would rather say *"i am going to have my hair cut"*. Similarly, it is not proper in Chinese Chinese to say "我去剪头发 *wo qu jian toufa*". Chinese language also has partially metaphoric expression. A few examples are listed and explained in the table below.

Table:2 Chinese semi-metaphoric phrases and their analysis

Semi-metaphoric phrase	Direct translation	Actual meaning
1. 打 扫 卫 生 *dasaoweisheng*	To clean health	To do the cleaning
2.尿裤子 *niaokuzi*	To pee pants	To pee in pants
3.买单 *maidan*	To buy menu	To pay the bill
4. 浇水 *jiaoshui*	To water some water	To water

As can be noted the from the translation column that the Chinese expression sound unusual in English (also in Shona). This is because they have in them a partially metaphoric sense.

Due to this across linguistic variations in the use of metaphors, the present research therefore hypothesizes that, student learning Chinese are bound to make more errors when they naturally use these metaphoric phrases in Chinese.

2. Background

There are already existing studies on Shona metaphors such asMberi (2003) ;Chikanja (2006) and Chapanga (2004) and others. These study have different in terms og their orientations.

(Mberi 2003) focus on phenomena such as body-part metaphors; (Chapanga 2004) focused on warmetaphors used in soccer commentaries; Kadenge and Mawunga(2015) analyzed Shona metaphors created during the Zimbabwean crisis and other. This study will focus to Shona V+N and N+V phrases that are semi-metaphoric, and examine how they cause production of error in the acquisition of Chinese language. Currently there are no studies related to Shona metaphor with reference to the acquisition of Chinese language.

Significance of the study

Teaching of Chinese language and culture has become widespread in many African countries including Zimbabwe. Shona speakers who are learning Chinese language and culture are

increasing day by day. In the course of learning second language, errors making is unavoidable and, there have to be feasible measures to reduce their occurrences. There are various sources of errors in second language acquisition. One among them which has not received enough attention in the while field on second language teaching in the effect metaphoric expression.

It is by general consensus by many linguists that metaphors constitute an important component of language. Taylor (2002) notes that the study of metaphorical expressions has played animportant role in the development of Cognitive Linguistics in general, and cognitivegrammar (CG) theory in particular. Hoffman (1983) pointed out that, metaphors play fundamental role in the understanding and cognition of vocabulary.

This study will there attempt to reveal how Shona semi-metaphoric phrases can easily lead to errors in Chinese language, with the sole intention of reducing occurrence of errors, and at the same time increasing quality of teaching Chinese as second language to Shona speakers. The study can be used as source of reference by other researcher in other languages. The few that exist compare Shona and English metaphors , for example, Machakanja's*Conceptual Metaphors in English and Shona* (2006).

3. Motivation of the study

There are Shona quiz jokes currently popular on the network platform: We will illustrate one example below :

Who said Shona is easy!

When we obtain milk from cows, what is it that we milk?

A. milk the cow B. milk the udders C. milk the tits D. milk milk

In Shona language all the options A to D can answer the question above . In some other context they may not necessarily substitute each other. For example, "*milk cow*" and "*milk milk*" usually substitute each other, but *"milk udder"* and *"milk tits"* are used in more specific context and may not substitute "*milk cow*" and "*milk milk*".

It can be said that, the success of such kinds jokes is solely dependant on the multiple-option nature Shona phrases, which the present study claim that they are semi-metaphoric.

4. **Data collection**

The present study was undertaken at the time when researchers were writing PHD thesis on the comparison between Chinese and Shona prepositions. Apart from the prepositional errors found in the corpus, the writer also found several other errors produced by Shona speakers who learn Chinese. These errors also reflected the various nature of Shona language. One of the most notable errors include the wrong phrasing resulting from wrong choice of wording. After finding these errors and analyzing their nature, we then went on a step further to carry out a survey testing   whether or not the student will transfer certain Shona semi-metaphoric phrases to Chinese.

The writers' first language is Shona, and he has also learned and acquired Chinese from the elementary level. He also has a two years experience in Teaching Chinese as Second Language to Shona speakers, and has also done other researches on the acquisition of Chinese by Shona speakers, probably most notably being co-authorof the *Shona -Chinese -Chinese-Shona Dictionary*; and, later a criticism of the same dictionary. Part of the data was obtained directly and indirectly from these learning, teaching and research experiences. Vast errors were observed from analysis of data and daily conversations and from the survey. Only a part of this was selected to finally suit the study parameters this paper.

Questionnaire survey

We specially set questions which were given to 50 students who were learning Chinese and whose first language is Shona. Among them, 27 were level three students from University of Zimbabwe Confucius Institute, 15 were second year outstanding students and 8 were post graduate students who just came to Chinese for one year language study. Based on standards of Chinese Proficiency Test, these participant can all fall under lower and upper classes of the intermediate level.The students were required complete the questionnaire under the supervision of an instructor. Below are the demands and rules of the questionnaire:

(1) Study helpers*(e.g dictionaries)* are allowed to use.

(2) Can use pinyin to answer questions.

(3) Write the answer only .

(4) Were clarity is needed it is allowed to ask, but should not ask for the correct response.

(5) Answer all questions provided.

(6) No depending on others' help.

The questions were strategically set such as to test if respondents will naturally use the metaphoric phrasing to complete the Chinese sentence. We think this is the best methods as (1) it is very simple to answer, (3) it is more direct or more precise to what it is searching for. Respondents are skillfully exposed right to the tested point, without being led or misled by the questioning and other linguistic interference. This helped the research to obtain less reject answers.(4) Data collection and analysis was made easier.

Questions

Respondents were required to read the Shona sentences and then complete the Chinese sentence below them, as shown below:

（1）*Kana tamuka tinofanira kuwaridza* _____

（起床后，我们应该铺_____）

（2）*Tinoenda kuchigayo ko*_____

我们用研磨机_____

（3）*Basa rabarber ndere ku* _____

理发师的工作是_____

（4）*Murwere anofanira*_____*mapiritsi*

病人应该_____药

（5）*Basa rachiremba ku rapa*_____

（医生的工作是治_____）

Data was collected, analyzed and the results of the data analysis were tabulated as below:

Table 3

Qn no.	Erroneous phrase	Quantity	propotion
1	铺被子 *pu beizi* (spread the bed)	15	30%
2	研磨玉米粉 *yanmo yumifen*	26	52%

	(grind corn flour)		
3	剪头（剪头部）*jian toubu* (shear hair)	21	42%
4	喝药 *he yao* (take medicine)	48	96%
5	治病人、治人 *zhi bingren/zhiren* (treat the patient)	31+9 =40	80%
Average		149	59.6%

The table shows that a total of 250 sentences were collected from 50 respondents and among them149 sentences had erroneous phrasing. A relatively smaller proportion (30%) wrote *"pu beizi "*(to spread the blanket);bout half of the respondents(52%) wrote *"yanmo yumifen"*(grind corn flour);42% wrote *"jian tou"(shear the head);* nearly everyone had written *"he yao"(*drink medicine) . Themajority wrote *"zhi bingren"*and small proportion chose to express it as *"zhiren"*(to cure a patient). All the above phrasings are accepted as in Shona language. However their direct translation into Chinese do not meet the standards of that language.

In the following sections we will analyze each of the errors from the survey together with a few other striking example errors selected from observations.

Table 3. Phraseology errors made by Shona speakers learning Chinese

Shona phrasing	Chinese	
	Wrong phrase	Correct phrase
1. gera bvudzi /musoro (shear the hair/head/people)	箭头 *Jian tou*, 剪人 *jianren* Shear the head	剪头发 *jian toufa* shear hair
2. -mwa/tora mapiritsi/mushonga	喝药 *He yao* ;拿药 *na yao*	吃药 chiyao;服用 *fuyong* eat medicine

(drink /take medicine)	drink /take medicine	
3. geza mvura/**ne**mvura (Wash water/wash **with** water)	洗水 *Xi shui* Bath water	用 水 洗 澡 *yong shui xizao* use water to bath
4. bhadara imba/rendi (Pay the room/ rent)	交房子 *Jiao fanzi* Pay the room	交房租 *jiao fangzu* pay tent
5. rapa murwere/chirwere (cure the patient/illness)	治病 *Zhi bingren* cure the patient	治病 *zhi bing* cure an illness
6. bika tii (cook/boil/make tea)	做茶 *Zuo cha* Cook tea	泡茶 *paocha* Bubbles or boil tea
7. gaya hupfu/chibage (grind corn flour/corn)	研玉米、研玉米粉 *Yan yumi,yan yumifen* Grind corn flour	研玉米 *yan yumi* grind corn flour
8. kama mombe/mukaka (milk the cow/milk)	挤奶牛、牛 *Jinai; niu* Milk the cow	挤奶 *ji nai* Squeeze milk (lit.)
9. nyora bvunzo/garira bvunzo (write/sit for an exam)	写考试 xie kaoshi Nyora bvunzo	参加考试 *cangjia kaoshi* take party in exam
10. Waridza gumbeze/mubhedha (Spread blankets/bed)	铺被子 pu beizi Waridza gumbeze	铺床 *pu chuang* Spread the bed

The table shows 10 sentences that were selected for analysis, 5 of them were those from the questionnaire survey , and the other 5 were selected from observations. The table has two main parts. The "Shona phrasing" section displays all the possible phrasings acceptable in Shona. The "Chinese" section is divided into two parts, namely "wrong phrase" and "correct phrase". These will show the errors produced by students, and the Chinese correct phrasing respectively. We will not show or discuss about the several correct phrases which we obtain, but will only focus on the errors.

5. Analysis of errors

(1) Basa rabarber ndere kugera/kugera vanhu

理发家的工作是箭头/剪人们 lifajia de gongzuo shi jian tou/ jian ren

    The barber's job is to clip head/ clip people

Error (1) shows that in Shona, it is very normal to hear someone saying *"clip head"* or *"clip people or person"*. These two phrases are generally used to refer to *clipping hear*. In Chinese they say *"clip hair"*,which is also the standard way in Shona. Therefore, *"clip head"* and *"clip people"* are used metaphorically to refer to *"clip hair"*. These phrases are very common in daily conversation and are used at more or less equal frequency, leading students into naturally apply them when they express themselves in Chinese.

(2) Murwere anofanira kumwa papiritsi

    病者应该喝药/拿药 bingren yinggai he yao/ na yao

    The patient has to drink some pills/ take some pills

In Shona *"taking medicine"* is commonly expressed as *"drinking medicine"*, and sometimes as *"take medicine"* though not so common. It seems that *"take medicine"* in Shona is an English-borrowed phrasing. In Shona they also say *"eat medicine"* just like the Chinese, but not as common as *"drink medicine"*. Also, *"eat medicine"* in Shona usually refer to taking medicine for purpose of possessing extra ability, like physical power;sexual prowess and other.

(3) handigezi mvura yakasviba

  我不洗澡脏水 wo bu xi zangshui

  I dont bath dirty water

    In Shona it is common to say "wash water" or "water+adj+water". The *Shona-English Dictionary* provides an example sentence*"muchando tizozeza ku**geza mvura** inotonhora"*.(during called season we hesitate to bath cold water)(pg67). In Chinese the verb "use" has to be used, for example, the above sentence should be phrased as *"wo bu **yong** zang shui xizao"* (*I don't **use** dirty water to bath).* This is also another alternative expression for Shona, but not very commonly used, *"handi**shand**isi mvura yakasviba kugeza"*. The other and

standard phrasing in Shona used a preposition *"handigezi **ne**mvura yakasviba"*, which is equivalent to English *"I don't bath **with** dirty water"*. It can clearly be seen that, Shona has three alternative, while Chinese has one only. Such phenomena will increase chances of errors production in Chinese.

  Expression related to this may include :

Musunge tambo

Tie him the rope

*系上他线子 *jishang ta xianzi*, and many other examples.

(4) Kupera kwemwedzi ndobhadhara imba

   At month end i pay the house/room

   月底我交房子/房间 *yuedi wo jiao fangzi*

In the example above it is not correct in Chinese to say *"pay a room"*, but would rather say*"pay rent"*, which is also the standard phrasing in Shona. In Shona the frequency of use of the two is more or less the same. This makes some student to express both ways just as in their first language, leading into some being unfortunate to choose expressions not to unacceptable in Chinese.

   In Chinese *"jiao fangzi"*(pay a house) is interpreted in another different way where *"jiao"*will have a slightly different meaning of *"handing over"*. For example , after the buyer pays for the house, the seller will hand over the house to the buyer , the seller will be said to have *"jiao fang"* to the buyer.

Other example related to this, which are also common in Shona may include:

Kubhadhara transport(bhazi, tekisi, kombi)

Pay transport (pay the bus; pay the lift etc)

(5) Basa rachiremba ndere kurapa varwere

   The doctor's job is to treat patience

   医生的工作是治病人 *yisheng de gongzuo shi zhi bingren*

In Shona, people use three different phrasing when generally referring to giving treatment for an illness. These are *"rapa murwere"*(treat the patient); *"rapa chirwere"*(treat the illness) and *"rapa munhu"*(treat a person). All of them can be used in a broad sense, for example, to describe the job of a doctor as above. However in certain contexts, they are not exactly interchangeable. For example, in *"I am giving a patient treatment"*, it is not possible in Shona to say, *"ndiri kurapa chirwere"*(I am treating an illness), but rather say*"ndirikurapa murwere"*(I am treating a patient).

(6) Makuseni tinobika tii

   In the morning we cooktea

   我们上午做茶 women shangwu zuocha

In Shona making tea is expressed in various ways. It is sometimes referred to as *"kugadzira tea"* (making tea) just like English; *"bhoirisa tii"*(boiling tea) just as in Chinese; and most commonly *"kubika tea"*(cooking tea), which is not proper expression in Chinese. The Chinese actually use a special terminology for "boiling tea" (煮茶 zhucha)，called "泡茶" (bubble tea).

(7) Tinoenda kuchigayo kogaisa hupfu

   We go to the grinding meal to grind corn flour

   我们去研磨机研磨玉米粉

In standard Shona people refer to *"grinding corn"* as*"gaya chibage"* just like most other languages. However, they also usually express it in a metaphoric way as *"grinding the corn flour"*. Both expression are equally commonly used. In Chinese it is not proper to say *"grinding corn flour",* making Shona having more alternative expression.

(8) *Basa rako iwe nderekukama mombe (from Dale(2004:88)*

   Your job is to milk cows

   你的任务就是挤牛 Ni de renwu jiu shi ji niu

In Shona just like English and some other languages, people say *"milk cow"*. However in

Chinese　say *"milk milk"*(milk[V] milk[N]), which another alternative expression for Shona. The Chinese do nothave the alternative to say "jinai" *(*milk cow). If they would want to involve the "cow" i9n this expression, then the sentence will have to introduce a preposition, *"gei"* to give a prepositional phrase *"gei niu jinai"* .*"Gei"*is a preposition that is unique to Chinese language, and is used to indicated the agent-recipient relationship. So the Chinese grammar becomes restricted to say "milk cow" without the preposition marker *"gei"*; at the same time, the students will also be restricted from making an equivalent phase with *"gei"* because Shona do not have the equivalent for it. The whole phenomena limits the two language from increasing chances of having common phrasing.

(9) Svondo rapfuura takanyora bvunzo

　　Last week we wrote exams

　　上星期我们写了考试。

Different languages societies have different ways of expressing *"taking exams"*. Chinese refer to it as*"participating in exam"* or *"taking party in exam"*, while in Shona they say *"kunyora bvunzo"*(write exams). there are some who would sometimes say*"kuita bvunzo"* , but is not so commonly said. *"kugarira bvunzo"*(sit for exams) seems to have been borrowed from English *"to sit for exam"*. It also seems to be more popular only among secondary, high school and university students.

(10) Kama tamuka tonofanira kuwaridza magumbeze

　　When we get up we should spread the blankets

　　起床后我们应该铺床

　In Chinese it is not very usual to say *"pu beizi"*(spread blankets). From the small survey we did among the Chinese people, it sounded unusual for them, at the same time not really totally condemn the phrase. In Shona both *"waridza mubhedha"*(spread bed) and *"waridza gumbeze"*(spread blankets) are both commonly said, while in Chinese *"pu chuang"*(spread bed)

the proper phrase.

6. Conclusion

The research concludes that Semi-metaphoric phrases easily cause errors by providing multiple-option phrasing, and their illusive nature. Shona multiple-option expressions has a bearing on the production of errorneous phrases in Chinese. It is beyond the cognizance ability of   learners to really separate Shona semi-metaphoric phrasing from standard phrasing in order to decide how to express themselves in the target language. They can simply transfer the knowledge of the the first language to the target language. On part of the students it will be a like a matter of "win-or-lose"situation, which this study, through a survey hypothesis that about 60% will be wrong expression in Chinese.

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