



ABAC ODI JOURNAL Vision. Action. Outcome

ISSN: 2351-0617 (print)

ISSN : 2408-2058 (electronic)

English Figurative Chunks Teaching and Comprehension

Among Chinese Private University Students

Yang Zhang

ABAC ODI JOURNAL Vision. Action. Outcome Vol 10 (1) pp. 202-219

[www.http://www.assumptionjournal.au.edu/index.php/odijournal](http://www.assumptionjournal.au.edu/index.php/odijournal)

Published by the

Organization Development Institute

Graduate School of Business and Advanced Technology Management

Assumption University Thailand

ABAC ODI JOURNAL Vision. Action. Outcome

Is indexed by the Thai Citation Index and ASEAN Citation Index

English Figurative Chunks Teaching and Comprehension English Figurative Chunks Teaching and Comprehension Among Chinese Private University Students

Yang Zhang¹

Corresponding Author, PhD Candidate, Graduate School of Human Sciences

Assumption University, Thailand

Lecturer, Heilongjiang International University. China

Email: 53932773@qq.com

Received: 18 February 2022

Revised: 28 March 2022

Accepted: 26 April 2022

Abstract

The comprehension of figurative language is a known difficulty among L2 learners, particularly with idiomatic expressions. As such the teaching of figurative chunks is of great significance. This study involved a pedagogical intervention for teaching figurative chunks through translanguaging to improve students' idiomatic expressions. Based on pretest of 108 students' comprehension of figurative chunks, 40 students were selected to participate in the translanguaging pedagogical intervention. The effectiveness of teaching can be determined through observations, the comparison of students' test results, and interviews. The main factors affecting the comprehension of figurative chunks were literal meaning and contextual factors. L2 learners' initial comprehension of figurative chunks was difficult to change without considering other factors. Therefore, during teaching, the teacher guided students in analyzing context and improving the ability to make inferences from figurative chunks. Through this intervention, students were able to develop the semantic and pragmatic comprehensive mode of figurative chunks in a specific context, which improved students' comprehensive ability and communicative ability.

Keywords: figurative chunks, comprehension, L2 learner, teaching, translanguaging

Introduction

For L2 learners of English a known difficulty is their comprehension of idiomatic expressions in figurative chunks. For L2 learners, the main goal of learning a second language is to improve their communication ability (Foley, 2012). However, how to express themselves fluently is difficult task for them to accomplish. It is difficult to solve the problems of fluency and use of idiomatic expression using traditional teaching methods in the process of second language acquisition (Pawley & Syder, 1983). Most of the time, teachers do not have much time in class to teach these language concepts. Thus, it is imperative that teachers teach students strategies and methods to improve their comprehension ability of idiomatic expressions. Teachers need to improve students' internalized second language comprehensive ability to have better output and ensure smooth communication. One way to

accomplish this with regards to idiomatic expressions is through teaching students how to handle figurative chunks. Figurative language is a thinking activity that can activate and strengthen the thinking of interlocutors (Colston, 2015). Moreover, it is also an expression of internalized language ability, which also exists in Chinese. Therefore, during teaching, improving students' figurative language comprehension and expressive ability should be the focus of teaching.

To that end, the purpose of this paper was to investigate teaching strategies that could help L2 learners in a Chinese private university understand figurative chunks to improve students' comprehensive ability. Although there is limited research on figurative chunks, the author devised a pedagogical intervention through the use of translanguaging to help the students develop their comprehension of idiomatic expressions using figurative chunks.

Literature Review

Figurative Language

Figurative language refers to idioms, metaphors, irony, or other non-literal forms of language use. When the context does not match the authenticity or relevance of the relevant words, the figurative meaning will be activated (Giora, 2003). People use figurative language to increase feelings, communicate politely, or describe things vividly.

Roberts and Kreuz (1994) provided eight types of figurative language: hyperbole, idioms, indirect requests, irony, understatement, metaphor, rhetorical questions, and similes. Albert (1998) pointed out that metonymy should be included in such a taxonomy. Colston (2015) studied a well-versed problem in linguistic research from a psycholinguistic perspective in his book *Using Figurative Language*. Colston found that formulaic language is frequently figurative. Moreover, he believed that the pragmatic role of figurative language is more than literal expression, which could improve communicative competence (Colston, 2020). He explored the figurativity of formulaic language, especially expressions of gratitude. He found that participants who expressed politeness, respect, and affection produced significantly more figurative lexemes than those who were not polite, respectful, and fond of their addressee.

Many scholars have studied metaphors and idioms (Lakoff & Johnson, 1983; Gibbs, 1998; Dancygier, 2014; Michele, 2017). Glucksberg's (2000) study of metaphor and idioms found that their meaning could not be conveyed literally. The relationship between their literal meaning and the meaning they convey was opaque, i.e. they do not have a words to world fit. Metaphors and idioms are commonly used in figurative languages. This section briefly discussed figurative expressions, in the next section how such expressions are handled

in figurative chunks is discussed.

Chunks

Pawley and Syder (1983, p. 191) believed that fluency and idiomatic expressions are a body of 'sense stems' which are 'institutionalized' or 'lexicalized'. Many scholars have named different appellations, such as lexical chunks (Lewis, 1993), lexical phrases (Nattinger & Decarrico, 1992), prefabricated phrases (Sinclair, 1991) and formal language (Wray, 2013; Kecskés, 2016), and more appellations as Wray summarized (2002). When combined, the meaning stored and extracted could be called a "chunks formal sequence" (Wray, 2002). Therefore, the combination of these different words was collectively referred to as "chunks" in this paper.

The role of chunk acquisition in the development of language ability is a topic for researchers. Chunks are regarded as an output strategy to ensure the fluency of language output and the advantages of language processing. In addition, the chunk is regarded as a communication strategy to ensure that communication is fluid (Myles, Hooper & Mitchell, 1998).

Promoting chunk acquisition on language output, especially oral fluency, is another focus of attention. Boers, et al. (2006) found that the number of chunks has a moderate correlation with oral fluency and accuracy. While Wood (2009) took oral fluency as the only variable measured, quantified as average sentence length, they investigated the impact of the use of chunks on oral fluency, and found that the use of chunks promotes oral fluency. Most of the above studies measured the impact of learners' lexical chunk use on verbal ability through correlation analysis, but the measurement of oral level and chunks in such studies was mainly based on the evaluation of native speakers.

Translanguaging

Welsh educator Williams proposed translanguaging in 1994. It was originally named after *Trawsieithu* and originated from a Welsh revitalization program. Teachers purposefully guided learners to input language information in English, and then used Welsh to output learning results and vice versa. Translanguaging originally referred to a teaching strategy that systematically alternated the use of English and Welsh in Welsh classrooms to promote students' language learning efficiency (Lewis, et al., 2012).

Baker then translated *Trawsieithu* into translanguaging, viewed translanguaging as the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages (Baker, 2001). García extended the concept of translanguaging to sociolinguistics and is known as one of the founders of translanguaging theory. García (2009, p. 45) viewed translanguaging as multiple discursive practices in which

bilinguals engaged to “make sense of their bilingual worlds”. Blackledge and Creese (2010) provided language teachers with a definition of translanguaging as a flexible bilingual pedagogy for learning and teaching in the bilingual classroom. García made the abstract concept of translanguaging explicit as a language phenomenon: language practice, which users could use to understand everything in the surrounding world. García and Lin (2016) further pointed out that translanguaging was a complex and flowing language practice and a teaching method to present these language practices.

At present, classroom research on translanguaging shows that bilingual students can strategically mobilize their complete "language and communication resources" to carry out innovative, critical, or self-empowerment cognitive activities (García & Palmer, 2017). Translanguaging was first applied in language teaching, conducive to students' understanding and communication through two or more languages, and improved students' cross-language knowledge construction. The understanding process of figurative chunks requires cognitive inferring. However, in classroom teaching and discussion, students' target language level cannot support their cognitive inferring. Therefore, translanguaging is needed to achieve the purpose of the semantic derivation of figurative chunks. Therefore, teaching figurative chunks through translanguaging meets the needs of L2 learners' daily communication. Language teachers need to guide students to learn figurative chunks in class and provide students with comprehension strategies to help them improve their internal comprehension ability of figurative chunks.

Figurative Chunks Studies in China

In China, figurative chunks involve the study of idioms and metaphor. Idioms are a kind of chunk, and metaphors have been studied primarily from a figurative point of view. There is few studies that explore metaphor chunks. Some scholars (Xie Hua, 2007; Xu Zhiyuan, 2013) have researched the influence of context on comprehension, while others Wei Lan (2006) conducted an empirical study on the relationship between idiom acquisition and reading, indicating that non-English majors may acquire a certain number of idioms in reading.

Xie Hua (2007) examined the effects of familiarity, transparency and context on Chinese learners' understanding of English idioms. The results showed that there was a certain correlation between familiarity and idiom understanding, but there was no obvious correlation between transparency and idiom understanding. However, learners were more accurate in understanding idioms with higher familiarity and transparency. Contextual information could help learners understand the metaphorical meaning of idioms correctly as the study found that there was an obvious interaction between familiarity and context.

Based on the theoretical framework of cognitive linguistics, second language

acquisition and bilingual mental lexicon, Xu Zhiyuan (2013) used surveys to investigate undergraduates learners' thinking processes and thinking output specifically focusing on Chinese English learners' metaphorical comprehension strategies, and the influence of English language proficiency on comprehension strategies and metaphor types. The results showed that Chinese EFL learners mainly use sentence context and literal translation strategies to understand metaphors, followed by English background knowledge and Chinese cultural knowledge, psychological image, and syntactic analysis strategies. Metaphor types affect English learners' comprehension ability. Chinese EFL learners' English proficiency affects their English comprehension strategies and their competence to understand metaphors.

Lu Zhi (2016) investigated 68 Chinese English learners' understandings of English idioms and analyzed the role of literal meaning of idioms on activating literal and metaphorical meanings of idioms. The subjects were required to listened to sentences containing either literal or non-literal idioms and partook in a lexical decision task to judge whether the literal sense related, or metaphor related target words were presented on the screen. The results showed that, the literal meaning of English idioms has no significant influence on Chinese English learners' understanding of English idioms, while the literal meaning and metaphorical meaning of English idioms have no significant difference in Chinese English students' understanding of English idioms. Chinese English learners' understanding of English idioms is affected by their mechanical memory of English idioms.

According to previous studies, context has a positive influence on the understanding of figurative language. However, there is no research on the figurative chunks teaching for L2 learners, let alone using translanguaging as the pedagogy.

Research Methodology

In order to enhance L2 learners' internal figurative chunks' comprehension ability and improve their communicative competence, it was necessary to design appropriate teaching methods. Based on this, the following research questions were raised:

1. What are the factors that affect L2 learners' comprehension of figurative chunks?
2. How does translanguaging pedagogy work in teaching figurative chunks for L2 learners?

Pedagogical Intervention

The aim of this research is to determine the factors of Chinese L2 learners' comprehension of English figurative chunks, and to help Chinese L2 learners to improve their figurative chunks comprehension ability through translanguaging pedagogy. According to teaching to learn content and language through translanguaging from García and Wei (2014, p 120) in their book translanguaging, three strategies were used.

The first one is to build background knowledge. The author explained the purpose of

the experiment to all the students before the experiment. After the briefing, the students were given a pretest which included 10 figurative chunks in a 250 words passage from the book *English For Social Interaction*. The students found out the figurative chunks in this passage. And then they wrote down the meanings and the strategies that affect L2 learners' comprehension of figurative chunks.

Secondly, for the deepen understanding, develop and extend new knowledge, critical thinking part, the students discussed the meanings and the comprehension strategies of figurative chunks in groups. After sharing their ideas of the process and results of group discussion, the author and the students analyzed the figurative chunks meaning using textual context.

Lastly, for cross-linguistic flexibility, the students were asked to make dialogues with the figurative chunks which they learned and did role play. The dialogues were developed by the students into role play to deepen their comprehension of figurative chunks by applying them to a similar context.

Collection of Data

One freshman non-English major class of a Chinese Private University participated in the research. In order to ensure a wider collection of L2 learners' comprehension of figurative chunks, 108 freshmen who are from two classes took part in the pretest of figurative chunks comprehension ability. To observe how students learn figurative chunks the author chose one class of 40 students from 108 students for teaching. The whole process of pedagogical intervention and interviews, including the conversations between teachers and students and between students, was recorded. All the data was collected. After the implementation of figurative chunks teaching, a post-test which included the same 10 figurative chunks was conducted to determine if there was improvement in their scores.

The whole teaching process was videotaped and recorded. All videos and recordings were stored as data. The classroom discourse between teachers and students, and among students was transcribed for analysis. From such classroom discourse the thinking process of Chinese EFL learners' understanding of the figurative language was captured. This analysis of the comprehension mechanisms of Chinese EFL learners towards English figurative language. In addition, through classroom discourse, how teachers used interactive features from SETT (Walsh, 2011) to help students improve their understanding of figurative chunks was analyzed, and whether the pedagogy of translanguaging worked for the students can be observed.

Scope of Population and Sampling.

Since English is a compulsory course in China's university education, all non-English

majors need to study English courses for at least two years, therefore, non-English majors are very important group in English teaching. For the test part of the study the participants were two classes totaling 108 freshmen undergraduates from a private university in Harbin, China (n=108). Their ages ranged from 18-19. There were 98 females and 10 males, because few students are male in these two majors. The students all spoke Mandarin and studied English for at least 11 years. The 108 students were from two classes of 40 and 68 students respectively. The class of 40 students were chosen to be included in the pedagogical intervention part of the study because they represent a normal class size at this university.

Scope of Instrument

Test

Based on the above research, a test which was used as pretest and post-test on the comprehension of figurative chunks was designed to answer research questions 1, which investigated whether students could recognize and comprehend figurative chunks and the comprehension strategies adopted by students in the process. Finally, the pretest and posttest results were compared to answer question 2. To answer question 1, 10 figurative chunks were shown in a passage, and the students needed to write down the meanings of the figurative chunks and the strategies they used for inference. These strategies include: “remember”; “literal meaning”; or “context”. Comprehension strategies of Chinese English learners to figurative chunks were further analyzed to answer question 1. Therefore, through the pretest, the comprehension strategies of Chinese English learners to the figurative chunks and the impact of the strategies can be seen. And the test was distributed as post-test after the pedagogical intervention two weeks later, which was supplemented by observations to answer question 2. To answer the question 2, 40 students who took part in the pedagogical intervention and later took the test again 2 weeks later. The content of the test was the same as the pretest. The students wrote down the meanings of the ten figurative chunks. The results of the pretest and posttest were compared to see if there was a significant difference in the students' pretest and posttest scores if there was then the teaching strategies can be considered effective. Three linguistic experts were invited to evaluate all the questions, and all questions in the test were verified by IOC.

Observations

Walsh's (2011) self-evaluation of teacher talk (SETT) framework conducts self-assessment through teachers' classroom discourse analysis. The purpose was to take classroom interaction as a meaningful activity to improve teaching and learning. As a series of complex and interrelated micro contexts, classroom discourse was constructed by teachers and learners in teaching and learning. Through classroom discourse analysis using the 14 interactive features of SETT three parameters of interaction were analyzed: 1) how the

teacher conducted the pedagogical intervention through translanguaging; 2) the mechanisms of understanding figurative chunks that the teacher and students were jointly constructing; 3) and how students creatively improved their figurative chunks comprehension ability. In order to have a deeper understanding of Chinese EFL learners' understanding of English figurative chunks, this study adopted the method of observations which can answer question 3. Observation data was collected by observing and recording the activities and behaviors of the students for analysis. The whole teaching process was videotaped and recorded. It should be noted that all classrooms in the university are equipped with video and audio recording equipment. Observations effectively recorded the processes of Chinese EFL learners' understanding of the figurative chunks. In addition, through classroom discourse, how teacher used interactive features from SETT (Walsh, 2011) to help students improve their comprehension of figurative chunks was analyzed. And the comprehension ability translanguaging constructed for the understanding and application of figurative chunks was observed.

Interview

Through the above the pedagogical intervention, students could transform their knowledge into verbal communication skills based on understanding the figurative chunks. The learning outcomes were identified with a posttest. Interviews were conducted to answer question 2. The interviews were conducted four months later after the end of teaching, and 15 students from the class of 40 students' were interviewed. After the post-test, according to the data, it can be analyzed whether the comprehension ability of the figurative language with different types of misunderstanding had been improved, and whether they associated with the figurative chunks in context, and used certain strategies to understand it. The teaching effects of the translanguaging pedagogical intervention were explored through interviews. At the same time, the interview was also a good way to better understand the cognitive development of figurative chunks and the improvement of students' language ability. The interview questions were validated by three English professors, and all questions in the test were verified by IOC.

Findings and Discussion

Comprehension Strategies of Figurative Chunks

A total of 10 figurative chunks were selected in this study. In order to understand the students' strategies in understanding figurative chunks, 108 students took the figurative chunks comprehension test and also had to write their comprehension strategies. All chunks were shown in a 250 word passage in order to eliminate the polysemy of chunks. The test examined students' strategies of understanding figurative chunks from three strategies:

remember or not, literal inferring strategy and context inferring strategy, so as to apply the understanding strategies to teaching.

When L2 learners encountered unfamiliar figurative chunks, that was, when the proportion of "remember" was low, the proportion of their strategies of literal inferring and contextual inferring would be higher, such as chunks items "just as well"; "beats me"; "Look, who's talking"; "first things first" (see Table 2). The students use more literal inferring and contextual inferring strategies to comprehend the meaning. The accuracy of comprehension of these chunks was not high. This is closely related to literal inferring combined with the overall perception of context.

From the students' comprehension of remembered chunks, only "set off" and "take up" had a correct comprehension rate of more than fifty percent. The remembered rate of these two chunks was close to eighty percent. For chunks with a high remembered rate, which is when the proportion of "remember" was high, the strategy of understanding chunks according to remembered meaning was generally used, and the strategies of inferring according to literal meaning and inferring according to context were less used. This indicates that when L2 learners see familiar chunks, they will remember them as a whole and extract them directly from memory, but they will first deal with the original meaning, such as "get lost". Therefore, when the initial meaning is inconsistent with the meaning in the context, some L2 learners will seek strategies of literal inferring and contextual inferring. The data showed that the proportion of remembered was high, and the chunks whose remembered meaning was consistent with the meaning in the context of the passage in the test had high comprehension accuracy. While the proportion of remembering was high, and the meaning which the L2 learner remembered was inconsistent with the meaning in the context of the passage in the test, the comprehension accuracy was low. And the data indicated that L2 learners comprehended the figurative chunks as the first remembered meaning, like "get lost", most students just comprehended as "can't find their way" which was wrong in this context. In this case, the original meaning which the L2 learner recited would be extracted as a whole. The students who used more contextual strategies had higher comprehension accuracy than those who used less contextual strategies.

Table 2*The Result of the Testing of Chinese EFL Learners' Comprehension of Chunks*

Chunks	Accuracy	In the Correct Comprehension (n=108)		
		Comprehension Strategy		
		Before Teaching		
		remember	Infer from the literal meaning	Infer from context
1.come off	36.1%	25.6%	30.8%	64.1%
2.set off	67.6%	79.5%	11.0%	24.7%
3. just as well	10.2%	9.1%	63.6%	100.0%
4. beats me	13.9%	13.3%	60.0%	53.3%
5. Look, who's talking.	5.6%	0.0%	33.3%	83.3%
6. take up	56.5%	77.0%	16.4%	21.3%
7. get lost	10.2%	63.6%	45.5%	27.3%
8. first things first	49.1%	5.7%	47.2%	50.9%
9. dying for	34.3%	62.2%	24.3%	40.5%
10.I've had it up to here.	4.6%	20.0%	60.0%	60.0%

Pedagogical Intervention

In this study, a class of 40 students from 108 students participated in the study of figurative chunks. The teacher obtain the students' initial comprehension of figurative chunks through a pretest, and selected chunks with low accuracy for teaching and then guided students to deduce the meaning of the figurative chunk by themselves through the derivation of literal meaning and context.

After the pretest of the figurative chunks comprehension, the teacher asked the students to figure out the meanings of the figurative chunks and the strategies that they used in groups. To enhance students' understanding and memory of figurative language, the teacher asked the students to make dialogues with figurative chunks in groups, and did role play.

This study mainly analyzed classroom discourse and the transcriptions of classroom discourse to understand whether teachers could play a scaffolding role in the teaching of figurative chunks, and what are the proper teaching strategies for the students, so as to improve students' comprehension of figurative chunks.

Build Background Knowledge

First of all, students will explore the meanings of figurative chunks in Chinese and English in groups so as to gain a deep understanding of comprehension strategies in a certain context. The teacher used scaffolding to guide the students to realize why they would

misunderstand the familiar figurative chunks.

In the building background knowledge section, the students were asked to find out figurative chunks in the 250 words passage in groups to establish the concept of figurative chunks. To ensure smooth communication, they used both Chinese and English to discuss the meaning of the figurative chunks. The three students in the following were discussing the meaning of the figurative chunks, and had different opinions on that, but agreed on the same strategies of comprehension which were literal meaning and contextual strategies. By setting up the background, the teacher gave the students a sense of what figurative chunks were, and the students used contextual strategies to help them understand the figurative chunks.

1. S1: "Dying for" should be a figurative chunk.
2. S2: "Dying for a cup of tea"是“渴望喝一杯茶”的意思吧?
(The meaning of dying for a cup of tea is yearning for a cup of tea, right?)
3. S3: 这个不是渴望一杯茶, 是等待一杯茶的时间。
(This is not to yearn for a cup of tea, but the time to wait for a cup of tea.)
4. S4: Rest.
5. S2: 不是, 我觉得是“我很渴望一杯茶”, to have a rest 也是通过上下文猜出来的。
(No, I think it's "yearn for a cup of tea" and "rest" is also guessed from the context.)
6. S1: 所以这是 literal meaning 和 context 这样混合推测出来的。
(So it is guessed through the mixture with the literal meaning and context.)

The students were able to figure out "dying for" is a figurative chunk, but not sure the meaning of the chunk. They were unable to explore figurative chunks in depth because of language limitations in their communication and switched to Chinese to keep the communication going. The meaning of "dying for" can be inferred through the understanding strategy of literal meaning and context.

Deepen Understanding

For figurative chunks that students were not familiar with and had a high error rate of understanding, and students could not deduce the meaning in the discussion, the teacher guided them to help them get the correct meaning.

In the teaching of the figurative chunks, the teacher stressing the comprehension of the inferring process and having students utilize their entire linguistic repertoire enables the students to integrate into their figurative chunks learning. In the following transcription, the teacher was teaching figurative chunks and asked the students to figure out the meaning of the figurative chunks in an English passage in , and the teacher guided the students to find out the meaning with their entire linguistic repertoire.

- 1 T: What's the meaning of "Look, who's talking" here? (L) 这个语块正确率非常低。
- 2 (The correct rate of this chunk is really very low.) (5) (D)
- 3 S1: Dad said you need so much luggage, and mom said your things take up more
- 4 space. Mom 回嘴了(1)(Mom replied back). Mom 埋怨(complain) dad. 你看你说

- 5 的什么啊。(What are you talking about?) =
- 6 T: =Yes. (C) According to the context, mom 回嘴了(Mom replied back) (H). How
- 7 about the other groups? (A) (3) (D)
- 8 S3: Must be bad words. (3) Er,不好意思说(4), 是讽刺。(Embarrassed to say, it's
- 9 an irony.) (1)
- 10 T: I heard that it is definitely not a literal meaning when you discuss it in groups.
- 11 Someone said that “看谁在说话”(who is talking for literal meaning), but the literal
- 12 meaning is not right according to the context. (C) The situation context here is dad
- 13 is complaining about mom. Mom replied back (H).是一种讽刺和埋怨。(It's a kind
- 14 of sarcasm and complaint). (1) Okay, who does “who” here refer to? =
- 15 SS: =Dad/ Dad/ Dad. =
- 16 T: =Right. (C)Then we can understand it as “看你说的” (“Look at what you
- 17 said.”) 但应该更有讽刺意味。那更深的含义应该是? (A) (However, it
- 18 should be more ironic. What is the deeper meaning of that?) =
- 19 SS: =你还好意思说? /你还好意思说? /你还好意思说? (Who’s talking?) =
- 20 T: =Good! (C) “你还好意思说? 你还说我呢? 你看你自己。” (“Who’s talking?
- 21 Are you talking about me? Look at yourself.”) It is easier to understand the
- 22 figurative chunks with literal meaning and context.

According to the correct rate of the figurative chunks, the teacher chose a very low scoring one. “Look, who’s talking” belonged to a fixed structure and was an idiom. For L2 English language learners the semantics of such an idiom are opaque and difficult to understand. Therefore, comprehending through context is a better method. The teacher guided students to comprehend through context, and used 14 strategies of SETT which was labeled as A to N to evaluate the whole teaching process and the students’ outcomes.

Display questions strategy was commonly used for asking questions to which teacher knew the answer labeled by L in the transcription. The teacher continuously guided the students to explore through the use of display questions, and deeply excavated the meaning of the figurative chunk according to the context and according to the teacher's ideas. The teacher showed the figurative chunk in line 1 “Look, who's talking?” to see whether any students could tell the answer with certainty and accuracy which used display questions strategy (L). In order to enable students to verbalize their understanding and not be afraid of saying the wrong answer, the teacher told the students that the correct rate of understanding this chunk was very low in line 2. Through the context, the teacher asked the students to pay attention to “who” which was referred to in the text in line 14 which also used display questions strategy to guide the students to figure out the cohesion here (L). Students could answer “Dad” without hesitation in line 15. Students could also discern an ironic tone in the language style in line 8. So the students could deeply understand that mom satirized dad according to the context, so this is not the real literal meaning of “who is talking?” It is figurative language,

which means that mom blamed dad for taking up a lot of space instead of mom.

Teacher encouraged students to participate more in class discussions, which was a scaffolding strategy labeled by A in the transcripts. She scaffolded the students to think more in line 23 guiding students to participate in class discussion in lines 8 and 10. Teacher also used an extends wait-time strategy labeled by D to give students some more time to think in lines 2, 8, and 10.

Students' comprehension of figurative chunks involves a process of exploration. Only by using context, conceptual metaphor, relevance and other factors can students answer the teacher's questions. Therefore, the teacher gave encouraging feedback to the students on the content strategy labeled by C in lines 6, line 12, line 16 and line 20. In order to affirm the students' comprehension results and let other students hear and understand the specific content affirmed by the teacher, the teacher adopted the strategy of teacher echo labeled by H in line 6 and 13, which repeated the students' verbalization and emphasized the correct idea. Then, based on the students' answers, the teacher would continue to guide the students to think further.

Teachers and students used the method of translanguaging in teaching. The teaching was a comprehension of figurative language, a process of reasoning that was different from the teaching of language elements in second language teaching. In the process of reasoning, students should use their entire linguistic repertoire, mobilize their mother tongue and English, combined with their reasoning skills to deduce. Therefore, teachers paid more attention to the reasoning process of students and the strategic framework of figurative chunks within it. At the beginning of teaching to comprehend figurative chunks easily, the teachers adjusted the difficulty of the language according to the students' English proficiency. In order to facilitate the students to communicate with the corresponding teaching content in the text, the teacher used English to comprehend the meaning of the language block itself. However, in order not to affect communication, to allow all students to participate in the discussion and to draw psychological distance between teachers and students, the teacher switched to Chinese in line 1 when analyzing the test results. Because this part was not related to the teaching content, and the language was difficult for the students to understand. The students also used English based on the teacher's answers when quoting the content of the passage and the language difficulty was low. But when commenting, or in the process of further reasoning, students automatically switched to Chinese. Finally, through translanguaging semantic reasoning, teachers can teach without communication barriers, to achieve the best teaching effect.

Cross-linguistic Flexibility

In view of remembering figurative chunks could improve students' comprehension, role-play was designed to deepen students' memory of figurative chunks to improve their ability to use them, and strengthen their communication skills. Since context is an effective

strategy for students to understand figurative language, teachers asked students to set similar contexts and used figurative chunks in them to deepen students' memory and improved their comprehension. The following was the student's transcription of role play. The italicized text are the figurative chunks learned in the teaching.

S1: We are *setting off* to the supermarket now.

S2: *Come off it*, we don't have a chance.

S1: Why?

S2: It's closed. You *took up* so much time to make up. *It beats me why* you need such a long time to make up every time.

S1: *Look who's talking*. Don't you spend a long time looking for clothes?

S2: *Get lost. First things first*, I am *dying for* some food.

In the process of role play, students did not only understand the semantics of the figurative chunks, but also understood the context and pragmatic rules of the figurative chunks. Most students made up dialogues according to the context of the given text. A small number of students with stronger comprehension ability expanded and applied these chunks to other contexts. Few students made mistakes, which indicates that it is necessary to practice figurative chunks in context.

Two weeks later, 40 students from the experimental class took a post-test. The posttest content was the same as the pretest content of 10 figurative chunks. The results of the comparison of pretest and posttest are shown in table 3. The 40 students correctly averaged 3.38 figurative chunks in the pre-test and 7.3 in the post-test. There are significant difference before and after ($p < 0.05$).

Table 3

Analysis of the test of Chinese EFL Learners' Comprehension of Chunks

	mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	p	n
		Lower	Upper				
Pretest	3.38	-4.52	-3.33	-13.35	39	.000	40
Posttest	7.3						

In order to figure out how translanguaging pedagogy works in teaching figurative chunks for L2 learners, the following interview was conducted after teaching at the end of the semester four months later to examine students' understanding of figurative chunks, teaching effects and students' feedback on the pedagogical intervention. 15 volunteers from 40 students participated in the interview.

For the first interview question 1, 4 students could remember the meaning of “beats me” without the context, and 8 students could remember through the context. 3 students

could not remember the meaning. For the second interview question 2, 13 students thought the teaching of figurative chunks could improve the comprehension ability of figurative chunks, and those same 13 students would infer by the strategy of context. For the third interview question 3, all of the 15 students thought it was necessary to use translanguaging in the teaching of figurative chunks, because it could help them construct a figurative comprehension through any language that could use.

The following excerpt was an interview with students four months later after figurative chunks teaching, which aims to find out how translanguaging pedagogy works in teaching figurative chunks for L2 learners.

- 1 T: Do you have memory of the chunk “beats me” we taught last semester?
 2 S: Er (3), yes, I did. (3)
 3 T: How do you comprehend when you see the chunk “beats me” the first time? =
 4 S: =有点震惊到我吧。让我震惊什么什么什么。(Kind of shocked me. I was shocked
 5 that balabalabala.) =
 6 T: =Why?
 7 S: Er(2), 因为当时看到这个短文, 这句话后面接了个什么行李吧。(Because at that
 8 time when I saw this essay, this sentence followed by a word seemed like luggage) =
 9 T: = Right
 10 S: I was shocked that why do you bring so much luggage? =
 11 T: =Oh-(2), You still understand it according to the context. =
 12 S: = Yes =
 13 T: = Oh, I see. Can you still remember its meaning now? (3)
 14 S: Er (2), now... (2) I have a little impression of this passage. (3) Ah, 好像是不明白
 15 为什么需要这么多行李。(It seems that I don't understand why do you need so
 16 much luggage.) =
 17 T: Yes. Why can you remember clearly now? (4)
 18 S: Er (2), I have an impression because the discussion was very interesting at that
 19 time. And we could use any language that we could use, that worked.
 20 T: So, such a teaching method still works.
 21 S: Yes.

By reviewing the figurative chunks, when the student recalled the meaning of the chunk again, she was most impressed by the comprehension of the figurative chunk for the first time. The correct comprehension rate of the phrase "beats me" was very low and the transparency was not very high, so it was difficult to comprehend. Although it has been said, if there was no context, the student would first think of the meaning they understood when they first saw the chunk in line 4. At the same time, she would remember the context in which the figurative chunk was located at that time in line 7 and recalled the meaning of the figurative chunks associated with it through the strategy of context in line 14. Therefore, the

student finally deduced the meaning of "beats me" through literal inferring and recall of context.

The students attained a high comprehension rate of "beats me" in the context reached 37.2% after teaching compared with 13.9% before teaching. After four months of teaching, the student could deduce the correct meaning under the action of literal comprehension and context, indicating that teaching was effective. In the process of comprehension the student was impressed with the passage and could remember the cohesive words behind the chunks in the passage in line 10. This shows that the student has a deep memory of this article, mainly because the student thought the teaching process was interesting. She could discuss the meaning of figurative chunks together and applied it to communication in line 18. Students felt comfortable discussing in any language where they could communicate in line 19. The results indicate that translanguaging can play a scaffolding role in students' comprehension of figurative chunks.

Conclusion

The teaching process of figurative chunks was based on a test of L2 learners' comprehension on figurative chunks. The analysis of the test showed that L2 learners remember the chunk as a whole and extract its meaning as a whole. The factors that affect the comprehension of figurative chunks by L2 learners are mainly literary and contextual. And the interview indicates that L2 learners have a particularly strong first impression of figurative chunks. That is to say, they are most impressed by the comprehension of self-inferring. So, inferring ability is very important in figurative chunks comprehension for L2 learners. Translanguaging is an effective method that can improve inferring skills in figurative chunks for the students, and an effective teaching strategy which can help them to improve comprehension ability. As chunks can be saved and extracted as a whole, L2 learners can extract them to improve their communication ability. However, there are some limitations to this study. Due to limited equipment, the time it took participants to activate figurative chunks while reading was not recorded. In the teaching of translanguaging, teachers can carry out more detailed analysis of inferring strategies for different kinds of figurative chunks.

References

- Baker, C. (2001). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism*. Multilingual Matters.
- Blackledge, A., & Creese, A. (2010). *Multilingualism: A critical perspective*. Continuum International.
- Boers, F., Eyckmans, J., Kappel, J., Stengers, H., & Demecheleer, M. (2006). Formulaic sequences and perceived oral proficiency: Putting a lexical approach to the test.

- Language Teaching Research*, 10(3), 245-261.
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1362168806lr195oa>
- Colston, H. L., & Herbert, L. (2015). *Using figurative language*. Cambridge University Press
- Colston, H. L. (2020). On why people don't say what they mean: Production of figurative formulaic language. In J. Barnden., & A. Gargett. (Eds.), *Figurative thought and language* (pp. 129–174). University of Alberta. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ftl.10.06col>
- Dancygier, B., & Sweetser, E. E. (2014). *Figurative language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Foley, J. A. (2012). *Unscrambling the omelette. Second language acquisition: Social & psychological dimensions*. Assumption University Press.
- Giora, R. W. (2003). *On our mind: Salience, context, and figurative language*. Oxford University Press. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-596X\(92\)90025-S](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-596X(92)90025-S)
- García, O. (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- García, O., Lin, A., & May, S. (2016). *Translanguaging in bilingual education*. Springer International Publishing, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02258-1\(Chapter 9\)](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02258-1(Chapter 9)), 117-130.
- García, O., Mateus, S. & D. Palmer. (2017). Translanguaging pedagogies for positive identities in two-way dual language bilingual education. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*, 16(4), 245-255.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2017.1329016>
- Gibbs, R. W., & Colston, H. L. (1995). The cognitive psychological reality of image schemas and their transformations. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 6(4), 347-378.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/cogl.1995.6.4.347>
- Glucksberg, S. . (2001). *Understanding figurative language: from metaphor to idioms*. Oxford University Press.
- Kecskés, I. (2016). Is the idiom principle blocked in bilingual L2 production? In R. R. Heredia & A. B. Cieślicka (Eds.), *Bilingual figurative language processing* (pp. 28–52). Cambridge University Press.
- Lewis, G. (1993). *The lexical approach*. Language Teaching Publications.
- Lewis, G., Jones, B., & Baker, C. (2012). Translanguaging: Developing its conceptualisation and contextualisation. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 18(7), 655-670.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611.2012.718490>
- Nattinger, J. R., & Decarrico, J. S. (1992). Lexical phrases and language teaching. *Modern Language Journal*, 78(2), 639-642. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587319>
- Myles, F., Hooper, J., & Mitchell, R. (1998). Rote or rule? exploring the role of formulaic language in classroom foreign language learning. *Language Learning*, 48(3), 323-364.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/0023-8333.00045>
- Pawley, A., & Syder, F. H. (1983). Two puzzles for linguistic theory: Nativelike selection and

- nativelike fluency. In J.C. Richards. & R.W. Schmidt (Eds.), *Language and Communication*. (pp. 119-228). Longman.
- Prandi, M. (2017). *Conceptual conflicts in metaphors and figurative language*. Routledge.
- Roberts, R. M., & Kreuz, R. J. (1994). Why do people use figurative language?. *Psychological Science*, 5(3), 159-163.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.1994.tb00653.x>
- Sinclair, J. (1991). Corpus, concordance, collocation. *Modern Language Journal*, 78(3).
<https://doi.org/10.2307/330144>
- Walsh, S. (2011). *Exploring classroom discourse: Language in action*. Routledge.
- Wood, D. (2009). Effects of focused instruction of formulaic sequences on fluent expression in second language narratives: A case study. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 12, 39-57.
- Wray, A. (2013). Formulaic language. *Language Teaching*, 46(3), 316-334.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444813000013>