

Prototypical Effect and Cultural Implication of Hakka

Proverbs^{*}

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When it comes to semantic change of metaphors, prototypical effects (Geeraerts, 1997), cognitive process (Györi, 2002) and cultural variation are considered influential. In this study, animal and plant Hakka proverbs are analyzed from three perspectives: familiarity, appropriateness, and daily usage frequency. One of the goals is to find out what semantic change is displayed from metaphorical referents on the foundation of prototype theory (Rosch & Mervis, 1975); the other goal is to realize what social and cultural variations are presented in Hakka community with regard to prototypical effects and semantic change of metaphors. There are altogether 24 Hakka participants categorized into two generations—the elder and the young, who are required to fill out the questionnaires containing 30 animal/plant proverbs. Results of the analysis indicate that prototypical features have slight disparities in two generations, and that elder people's language use habits have impacts on their children's utterance of Hakka metaphors in proverbs. In conclusion, though prototypical effects have maintained similar for generations, semantic change of metaphors still occurs as a result of language contact as well as social development.

Key words: semantic change, metaphor, prototype, cognition, cognitive economy

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1. Introduction

Handed down from generation to generation and considered part of prominent human heritage, proverbs present us with significant instructions and intriguing associations. By means of profound research on proverbs, one can obtain insights into certain social properties, as well as signs of language changes. In the process of explicating the formation, development and pragmatic functions of proverbs, such factors as prototypes and metaphors should be taken into consideration.

Over centuries of inhabitation in Taiwan, Hakka people have naturally bred their unique and representative proverbs. Those proverbs can be taken as reflections on Hakka people's concepts and lifestyles (Yang, 2000; Hsiung, 2006; Hsieh, 2009). Among all the Hakka proverbs, an abundance of them have their correlation with life-form expressions, animals and plants in particular. For example, in the proverb lan24ngiu11to24sii31ngiau55 懶牛多屎尿 'A lazy ox has more droppings', lan24ngiu11 'lazy ox' serves as a metaphor which refers to an indolent person. Figuring out the prototypical features and metaphorical referents of animals and plants in the proverbs will be beneficial to the understanding of Hakka culture and its distinctive characters. Additionally, compared the conceptualization of prototypes and metaphors in Hakka proverbs between the old and the young is probable to provide generation differences, which can be seen as persuasive clues for lexical change.

Hakka proverbs are worthy to be discussed and explored for the realization of Hakka community. However, compared with the studies on Mandarin Chinese and Southern Min proverbs, those on Hakka proverbs are relatively fewer, let alone research from the perspective of semantic change. As a consequence, the present study aims at analyzing the metaphors of animals and plants applied in Hakka proverbs, explicating their prototypical features, and proposing lexical and social changes in Hakka community as well. Questionnaire survey was applied and participants were 24 Hakka people. Discussion would be on the variation of prototypical features and metaphorical meanings between generations.

Two research questions ask:

- (1) On the basis of metaphorical referents in Hakka proverbs, what semantic change is displayed?
- (2) What are the social and cultural variations presented in Hakka community with regard to prototypical effects and semantic change of metaphors?

The study consists of six sections as for the structure: (1) Introduction; (2) Literature review—where a number of previous related papers were discussed from the perspective of semantic change; (3) Research framework—including rationale, explanations of participants and procedure, and theoretical background; (4) Data analysis—which illustrated semantic change of metaphors in Hakka proverbs, and offered explanation of such variation by means of cultural connotations and prototypical effects; (5) Discussion, and (6) Conclusion.

2. Literature review

In this section of literature review, a number of research studies on semantic change will be dealt with from the perspectives of metaphorical change and prototypical features.

2.1 Semantic change and cognition

In the trend of human development, language systems have undergone unavoidable variation of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. As far as semantic change is concerned, there are bunches of issues proposed.

In linguistic activities, language is not merely a tool for communication, it is also significant for cognition, involving gathering, inputting and outputting information (Neisser, 1976; Györi, 2002). With regard to cognition, Paul (1920) had already proposed that the change of a word's meaning had much to do with humans' conceptualization. Cognitive processes, hence, were naturally accepted to operate in speakers' linguistic behavior, and became a clue to study change in linguistic activity (Winters, 1992). Decades later, Györi (2002) also aimed to provide an explanation for semantic change from the angle of cognition, investigating what cognitive factors accounted for the change. According to Györi, metaphor, metonymy, etc., are all regarded as "cognitive devices for sharing perspectives and conceptualizations", which facilitate to guide semantic innovation (2002: 126). Take communicative purposes, for example. In order to keep speaker-hearer interaction smooth and balanced once innovation arises, metaphor plays the role to alter novel usage within a conventionalized system. Gradually, this altered system is received and taken granted in new generation's linguistic activity, and that is how semantic change takes place. In light of this viewpoint, semantic change is discovered from exploring two generations' cognition of Hakka proverbs in the present study.

2.2 Semantic change and metaphor

There are researchers exploring semantic change specifically on the basis of one figure of speech—metaphor. In the process of language change, the value of metaphorical usage cannot be overlooked. Since metaphor can function as a conceptual avenue for communication and it can be seen almost universally in language use, it is likely to serve as the basis for change of meanings, as other figures of speech do (Anttila, 1989; Anttila, 1992; Holmquist, 2006). In Holmquist's (2006) research, she examined metaphorical shifting, focusing on how human capacity for metaphorical thought and expression inspired language change. According to Holmquist, not only is metaphorical usage considered "an important driving factor in that process of evolution", but it also becomes "conventionalized" in leading word-meaning shift (2006: 95). Hence, the exploration of how metaphorical meanings alter among different generations helps to discover the phenomenon of semantic change, which is one of the research goals in this current study.

2.3 Semantic change and prototype

For the explanation of semantic change, some other researchers set out from analogical aspect, which established a link between semantic change and prototype theory and brought about prototype-theoretical semantics (Geeraerts, 1997). By means of prototypical features, when encountering new experiences in communication, we enable ourselves to adapt, extend or restrict those new meanings and draw them within our intelligibility. As a result of association and analogy by prototypical character, semantic change in language usage can be carried out more flexibly and smoothly (Geeraerts, 1997; Györi, 2002). As shown in Zhang & Shao's (2010) research, from the perspective of prototype shift, retronyms help to provide new evidence for semantic change. In addition, adopting a corpus-based analysis of the semantic change of wit, Paivi (2002) found that there were different prototypical centers for the concept of wit, offering proof for semantic change over time. In the present study, it is explored whether prototypical alternation in life-form expressions brings about semantic change in lexical choices.

3. Research framework

Details on participants, proverbs, and procedure are given in the following three subsections.

Participants

This study included totally 24 participants, who were divided into two groups according to age. As Table 1 shows, the total number of two groups of participants is both 12, with the elder generation involving 4 males and 8 females, and the younger generation also composing of 4 males and 8 females. The average ages of the elder generation and the younger generation are 56 and 18 respectively.

All the participants' mother tongue is Hakka, in which they would speak in daily conversation more or less. As to the time of inhabitation in the Hakka town Miaoli, the average span of the elder participants is over 30 years, and that of the younger participants is about 18 years.

Table 1. General information of participants

Background information	Elder generation (<i>N</i> =12)	Younger generation (<i>N</i> =12)
Gender		
Male	4	4
Female	8	8
Average age	56	18
Mother tongue	Hakka	Hakka
Daily use of Hakka	Yes	Yes
Average time of inhabitation in Miaoli (year)	Over 30	About 18

Hakka proverbs

The Hakka proverbs¹ analyzed in the current study each should contain at least one animal or plant, which is taken as the metaphor for human beings. For instance, the animal metaphor vai24tsoi55kie24 歪嘴雞 ‘skewed mouth chicken’ in the proverb vai24tsoi55kie24 kien31siit5 ku2 歪嘴雞揀食穀 ‘A skewed mouth chicken picks over cereal’ represents a picky but incompetent person. With the metaphorical meaning in mind, participants were inquired if the prototypical features of chicken corresponded to the representation of this metaphor; moreover, they had to express their familiarity with this proverb and their frequency of using this metaphor in daily life.

Each animal/plant metaphorical meaning would be presented with a context, the metaphor is underlined and the metaphorical meaning is given (see appendix). With the presentation, participants are facilitated their understanding of the animal/plant metaphor involved. Participants’ perception toward every proverb was the focus of the investigation. In the process of data collection, we found more animal metaphors are adopted to refer to human personality traits than plant metaphors. Despite the unbalance, plant metaphors share the same importance to indicate semantic change as animal metaphors. As a result, we presented 30 Hakka proverbs in the questionnaire, with 25 the animal metaphor and 17 the plant metaphor.

Procedure

Two forms of questionnaires were adopted in this current study to explore semantic change of metaphors in Hakka proverbs. In the first questionnaire survey, the elder participants were instructed to rate different Hakka proverbs from three major perspectives: (1) their familiarity with the proverbs; (2) the appropriateness of metaphors comprised in the proverbs according to prototypical features; (3) the frequency of their usage of the proverbs in daily lives. Five-point scale was adopted to make the rating, with one point standing for the lowest familiarity, appropriateness and frequency; whereas, five points represented the highest levels of three aspects.

The second form of questionnaires was distributed to the younger group of participants. The young were asked to fill out their questionnaires similarly to the assignment of the elder. That is, they needed to make the rating of Hakka proverbs from the three above-mentioned perspectives: familiarity, appropriateness, and frequency of usage. The difference was that other than rating, they were further asked to write down more suitable vehicle of metaphors and more frequent usage of metaphors that they tend to utter in everyday lives if they marked the points under 2—which represented that “I think the animal or plant image is not very appropriate for the metaphor”, and that “I never/rarely use the animal or plant metaphor in my daily conversation”. Detailed results derived from two groups of participants are presented in Table 2 which will be elaborated in the next sections. With the detailed information offered by the young, and the results drawn from the first questionnaire survey, semantic change of metaphor in Hakka proverbs can be secured.

¹ The phonetic transcription systems that are adopted in this study are: Tongyong Pinyin for Sixian Hakka, following the system used in *Xianshang Keyu Yousheng Zidian* (Online Hakka Audio Dictionary) designed by *Hak Ka Ngien Kiu Sa* of National Taiwan University; the Taiwanese Romanization System (the version publicized by Ministry of Education in 2006) for Taiwanese Southern Min.

Additionally, the differences between two generations are useful tools for analyzing semantic change from a prototypical and cultural point of view.

Table 2. Appropriateness of animal/plant metaphors in Hakka proverbs

Metaphor	(N)	M (1~5)	
		Elder	Young
Cat	5		
<i>tshiangmiang24meu55</i> 'blind cat'	1	3.50	4.33
<i>meu55tsii31</i> 'daughter cat'	1	4.83	3.83
<i>meu55ma24</i> 'mother cat'	1	4.83	3.83
<i>ho31meu55</i> 'nice cat'	1	3.83	4.17
<i>ko24ka24meu55</i> 'visiting cat'	1	3.50	3.83
Chicken	3		
<i>tshii2ngie5pan55iam24kie24</i> 'chicken of July 15th'	1	4.50	3.17
<i>ka55kie24then11kie24</i> 'with the chicken that gets married to'	1	4.33	4.17
<i>vai24tsoi55kie24</i> 'skewed mouth chicken'	1	4.33	3.33
Dog	5		
<i>tshiangmiang24kieu31</i> 'blind dog'	1	3.67	3.83
<i>tsong31mun11kieu31</i> 'door-keeping dog'	1	4.00	3.67
<i>ka55kieu31then11kieu31</i> 'with the dog that gets married to'	1	4.33	4.17
<i>mu55ku55kieu31</i> 'mute dog'	1	4.33	3.83
<i>ho31kieu31</i> 'nice dog'	1	3.83	4.17
Fox	2		
<i>fu11li11ma24</i> 'female fox'	1	2.50	4.00
<i>ka55to55fu11li11man24san24tseu31</i> 'run with the fox that gets married to'	1	4.33	4.17
Horse	2		
<i>lan55ma24</i> 'incapable horse'	1	3.00	3.33
<i>ok2ma24</i> 'mean horse'	1	4.17	4.00
Ox	5		
<i>hau55teu55ngiu11</i> 'combative ox'	1	4.67	4.50
<i>ngiu11ma24</i> 'female ox'	1	4.00	3.50
<i>lan24ngiu11</i> 'lazy ox'	1	4.83	4.50
<i>man55ngiu11</i> 'slow ox'	1	3.17	3.83
<i>mo11phi55ngiu11</i> 'ox without nose ring'	1	4.33	3.67
Bird	3		
<i>tiau24mo11mo24</i> 'bird without feather'	1	3.17	3.50
<i>tshiang24mien55tiau24</i> 'green-faced bird'	1	4.33	4.00
<i>muk2soi55tiau24</i> 'sleeping bird'	1	3.50	4.33
Bamboo	2		
<i>ho31tsuk2</i> 'good bamboo'	1	3.50	3.67
<i>khut24lun11tsuk2</i> 'rotten bamboo'	1	3.50	3.67
Blossom	1		
<i>fa24</i> 'flower'	1	4.50	4.33
Fruit	1		
<i>ngion24tshii55</i> 'soft persimmon'	1	4.00	4.50
Grass	1		
<i>tsho31</i> 'grass'	1	3.67	3.67
Radish	1		
<i>vu24sim24tshoi55theu11</i> 'black-hearted radish'	1	3.50	3.67
Squash	4		
<i>la55phu11sok5</i> 'bad bottle-gourd scoop'	1	5.00	4.00
<i>fu31kua24</i> 'bitter gourd'	1	3.83	3.67
<i>phu11kua24</i> 'bottle gourd'	1	3.17	3.33
<i>tung24kua24</i> 'white gourd'	1	3.17	3.33
Tree	3		
<i>thai55su55</i> 'big tree'	1	3.67	3.67
<i>su55si31</i> 'dead tree'	1	2.83	3.50

<i>su55sang24</i> 'living tree'	1	2.83 / 3.50
Vegetable	1	
<i>lan55tshoi55lam11</i> 'bad vegetable basket'	1	4.33 / 3.50
Vine	3	
<i>then11</i> 'vine'	1	3.83 / 3.67
<i>then11si31</i> 'dead vine'	1	2.83 / 3.50
<i>then11sang24</i> 'living vine'	1	2.83 / 3.50
<i>Total</i>	42	3.90 / 3.83

4. Findings: Metaphorical change of life-form expressions in Hakka proverbs

Prototype theory (Rosch & Mervis, 1975) was elected as the base applied throughout the study. The analysis of Hakka proverbs from prototypical effects and metaphorical change are proposed in the following sections.

4.1 Prototypical effects of animals and plants embodied in Hakka proverbs

The application of prototype and its periphery effects in each animal/plant expression has close relationship with its attached culture. Looking into the animal/plant metaphors in proverbs, therefore, presents a reflection upon the cultural characteristics. There were 30 Hakka proverbs which contained altogether 25 animal metaphors and 17 plant metaphors analyzed in this study. Table 3 below presents the average rating score for the appropriateness of each animal/plant metaphor.

According to Table 3, among the 25 animal metaphors, cat, dog, and ox are the three animals that appear most frequently in Hakka proverbs, with the same number of 5. The reason for this may be that dogs and cats were most commonly raised at home by people, and that oxen were mainly responsible for cultivation in the past agriculture society. Aside from animal metaphors, squash is taken as the most frequent plant metaphor, with the number of 4. It may be because that in the previous tough times, Hakka people tended to plant and feed on squashes owing to their easy growth and long-term preservation.

Concerned with prototypical features and metaphorical referents in Hakka proverbs, chicken is the one that is considered most appropriate for human metaphor by the elder participants, with the mean rating of 4.39. After chicken comes ox, cat, and dog, the mean rating scores for which are all above 4.0 and are close to the top chicken. Blossom and grass are the two top appropriate plant metaphors, and the mean rating scores are 4.5 and 4.4 respectively. The third to fifth appropriate ones are vegetable, radish, and fruit, with the mean rating all above 4. When it comes to the young, similarly, dog, cat, and ox are the top three that convey the most appropriate prototypical features in animal metaphors ($M= 4.08, 4.0, 4.0$), while fruit and blossom are the two most appropriate plant metaphors ($M= 4.50, 4.33$). Generally speaking, the appropriateness mean scores for both the animal and plant metaphors are slightly higher in the elder groups than in the young groups, with the mean difference scores 0.03 and 0.11 respectively.

Table 3. Appropriateness of animal/plant metaphors in Hakka proverbs

Animal (N)	<i>M</i> (1~5)		<i>MD</i>	Plant (N)	<i>M</i> (1~5)		<i>MD</i>
	Elder / Young				Elder / Young		
Cat (5)	4.10 / 4.00	0.10	Bamboo (2)	3.50 / 3.67	-0.17		
Chicken (3)	4.39 / 3.56	0.83	Blossom (1)	4.50 / 4.33	0.17		
Dog (5)	4.03 / 3.93	0.10	Fruit (1)	4.00 / 4.50	-0.50		
Fox (2)	3.42 / 4.08	-0.66	Grass (1)	4.40 / 3.67	0.73		
Horse (2)	3.59 / 3.67	-0.08	Radish (1)	4.20 / 3.67	0.53		
Ox (5)	4.20 / 4.00	0.20	Squash (4)	3.79 / 3.58	0.21		
Bird (3)	3.67 / 3.94	-0.27	Tree (3)	3.11 / 3.56	-0.45		
			Vegetable (1)	4.33 / 3.50	0.83		
			Vine (3)	3.17 / 3.56	-0.39		
<i>Total</i> (25)	3.91 / 3.88	0.03	<i>Total</i> (17)	3.89 / 3.78	0.11		

Note. *MD* refers to the difference between the mean of the elder and that of the young.

4.2 Semantic change of metaphors for human beings in Hakka proverbs

Animal/plant expressions which bear metaphorical meanings in Hakka proverbs reveal Hakka people's viewpoints on interpersonal relationship, marriage, society, environment, etc. However, changes given rise to economic and technological development may have impacts on language use. As a result, the same metaphor is very likely to convey distinct metaphorical meanings among different generations. In addition, with the decreasing frequency of daily usage, the meanings and functions of some metaphors may get weakened as time goes by. As a result, semantic change is likely to occur.

4.2.1 Phenomena of semantic change of metaphors: Familiarity vs. frequency of daily usage

The relationship between familiarity with Hakka proverbs and frequency of daily usage of metaphors in Hakka proverbs is supposed to show the phenomenon of semantic change. Table 4 presents the elders' and the young participants' familiarity (F1) and their frequency of daily usage (F2) of animal/plant metaphors in Hakka proverbs.

According to Table 4, the mean score of F1 for the elder is almost two times higher than that for the young, with the comparison of 3.21 to 1.63. It shows that the younger generation gets much less contact with Hakka proverbs in their daily lives, and thus leads to their low familiarity. Even though there are remarkable dissimilarities in F1, F2 presents minor disparities between the two generations. The mean scores of F2 for the elder and the young are 1.87 and 1.46 respectively, with only 0.41 in mean difference. It can be inferred that in daily conversation with the young, elder people have the tendency not to adopt metaphors from Hakka proverbs. Consequently, it makes sense that the elder people's low F2 results in the younger generation's low F1.

Table 4. Familiarity and daily usage frequency of animal/plant metaphors in Hakka proverbs

Metaphor	Elder (N=12)		<i>R</i>	Young (N=12)		<i>R</i>
	F1 / F2 (<i>M</i> 1~5)			F1 / F2 (<i>M</i> 1~5)		

Cat				
<i>tshiang24miang24meu55</i> ‘blind cat’	2.17 / 1.67	0.97	1.58 / 1.42	0.96
<i>meu55tsii31</i> ‘daughter cat’	4.83 / 3.67	0.47	1.58 / 1.33	0.80
<i>meu55ma24</i> ‘mother cat’	4.83 / 3.67	0.47	1.58 / 1.33	0.80
<i>ho31meu55</i> ‘nice cat’	3.67 / 1.83	0.18	2.08 / 1.75	0.21
<i>ko24ka24meu55</i> ‘visiting cat’	2.33 / 1.67	0.81	1.83 / 1.58	0.44
Chicken				
<i>tshit2ngie5pan55iam24kie24</i> ‘chicken of July 15th’	4.50 / 1.83	0.12	1.42 / 1.25	0.92
<i>ka55kie24then11kie24</i> ‘with the chicken that gets married to’	4.17 / 2.83	0.89	2.33 / 1.83	0.23
<i>vai24tsoi55kie24</i> ‘skewed mouth chicken’	4.00 / 1.00	0.47	1.83 / 1.42	0.20
Dog				
<i>tshiang24miang24kieu31</i> ‘blind dog’	4.50 / 2.17	0.10	1.67 / 1.33	0.80
<i>tsong31mun11kieu31</i> ‘door-keeping dog’	4.33 / 2.17	0.45	1.83 / 1.50	0.90
<i>ka55kieu31then11kieu31</i> ‘with the dog that gets married to’	4.17 / 2.83	0.89	2.33 / 1.83	0.23
<i>mu55ku55kieu31</i> ‘mute dog’	4.17 / 2.83	0.56	1.75 / 1.50	0.87
<i>ho31kieu31</i> ‘nice dog’	3.67 / 1.83	0.18	2.08 / 1.75	0.21
Fox				
<i>fu11li11ma24</i> ‘female fox’	2.67 / 1.83	0.68	1.92 / 1.75	0.98
<i>ka55to55fu11li11man24san24tseu31</i> ‘run with the fox that gets married to’	4.17 / 2.83	0.89	2.33 / 1.83	0.23
Horse				
<i>lan55ma24</i> ‘incapable horse’	2.17 / 1.17	0.82	1.42 / 1.09	0.79
<i>ok2ma24</i> ‘mean horse’	4.50 / 2.67	0.95	1.75 / 1.58	0.88
Ox				
<i>hau55teu55ngiu11</i> ‘combative ox’	4.50 / 2.67	0.61	1.92 / 1.67	0.96
<i>ngiu11ma24</i> ‘female ox’	3.00 / 2.17	0.53	1.25 / 1.08	0.50
<i>lan24ngiu11</i> ‘lazy ox’	4.83 / 2.67	0.36	1.83 / 1.75	0.59
<i>man55ngiu11</i> ‘slow ox’	1.50 / 0.67	0.88	1.33 / 1.25	0.50
<i>mo11phi55ngiu11</i> ‘ox without nose ring’	4.00 / 2.33	0.61	1.33 / 1.25	0.77
Bird				
<i>tiau24mo11mo24</i> ‘bird without feather’	1.00 / 0.67	0.98	1.50 / 1.08	0.92
<i>tshiang24mien55tiau24</i> ‘green-faced bird’	5.00 / 3.00	0.00	1.42 / 1.25	0.88
<i>muk2soi55tiau24</i> ‘sleeping bird’	2.17 / 1.67	0.97	1.58 / 1.42	0.96
Bamboo				
<i>ho31tsuk2</i> ‘good bamboo’	2.33 / 1.17	0.81	1.58 / 1.50	0.81
<i>khut24lun11tsuk2</i> ‘rotten bamboo’	2.33 / 1.17	0.81	1.58 / 1.50	0.81
Blossom				
<i>fa24</i> ‘flower’	4.17 / 2.33	0.55	1.83 / 1.75	0.94
Fruit				
<i>ngion24tshii55</i> ‘soft persimmon’	3.67 / 1.83	0.58	1.92 / 1.83	0.93
Grass				
<i>tsho31</i> ‘grass’	3.00 / 0.83	0.81	1.50 / 1.50	0.79
Radish				
<i>vu24sim24tshoi55theu11</i> ‘black-hearted radish’	1.33 / 0.50	0.87	1.42 / 1.42	0.83
Squash				
<i>la55phu11sok5</i> ‘bad bottle-gourd scoop’	5.00 / 3.67	0.00	1.58 / 1.67	0.92
<i>fu31kua24</i> ‘bitter gourd’	2.00 / 1.33	0.96	1.58 / 1.42	0.86
<i>phu11kua24</i> ‘bottle gourd’	1.50 / 1.00	0.98	1.00 / 1.17	0.65
<i>tung24kua24</i> ‘white gourd’	1.50 / 1.00	0.98	1.00 / 1.17	0.65
Tree				
<i>thai55su55</i> ‘big tree’	3.00 / 0.83	0.81	1.50 / 1.50	0.79
<i>su55si31</i> ‘dead tree’	2.17 / 1.17	0.85	1.42 / 1.33	0.93
<i>su55sang24</i> ‘living tree’	2.17 / 1.17	0.85	1.42 / 1.33	0.93
Vegetable				
<i>lan55tshoi55lam11</i> ‘bad vegetable basket’	3.83 / 2.67	0.63	1.50 / 1.50	0.88
Vine				

<i>then11</i> 'vine'		2.00 / 1.33	0.96	1.58 / 1.42	0.86
<i>then11si31</i> 'dead vine'		2.17 / 1.17	0.85	1.42 / 1.33	0.93
<i>then11sang24</i> 'living vine'		2.17 / 1.17	0.85	1.42 / 1.33	0.93
Total 42	Average	3.21 / 1.87	NA	1.63 / 1.46	NA

The correlation between F1 and F2 of each animal/plant metaphor is presented in Table 4. All of the metaphors are analyzed to be positive correlative. Figure 1 below shows the number of metaphors which belong to low, medium, or high correlation categories of two generations. For the elder participants, 23 metaphors are highly correlative, 13 are in medium correlation, and only 6 are low correlative; for the younger participants, 25 are significantly correlative, 13 are in medium correlation, and 6 are low in correlation. While the numbers of highly correlative metaphors are similar in two generation, it represents opposite meanings. For the elders, most conditions are that the higher F1 is, the higher F2 is; whereas for the young, the lower F1 is, the lower F2 is.

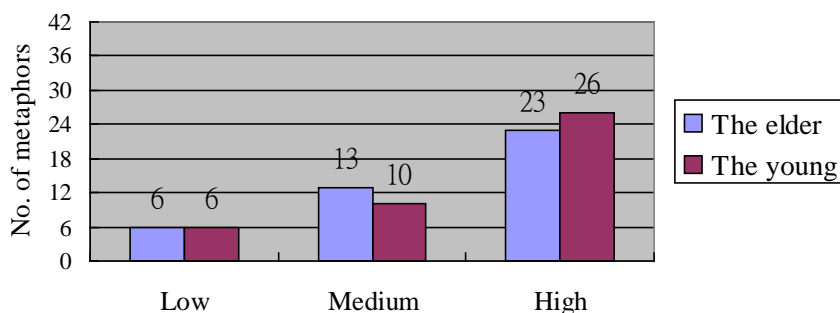


Figure 1. Familiarity and daily usage frequency of animal/plant metaphors in Hakka proverbs

4.2.2 Causes of semantic change of metaphors

Semantic change of metaphors can be observed from phenomena of elevation, degeneration, widening, narrowing, hyperbole, litotes, etc. (Bloomfield, 1933) in their metaphorical meanings. As for the causes, cultural and social variation can account for semantic change of animal/plant metaphors in Hakka proverbs. Some examples are given as follows to illustrate how cultural and social changes lead to semantic change of metaphors.

First, cultural causes of semantic change of metaphors in Hakka proverbs can be discussed from the perspective of language contact. Examples (1) and (2) below offer the explanations. In Example (1), *fu11li11ma24* originally referred to a woman who speaks unrealistically and unreliably. However, affected by the Mandarin term *hu2li2jing1* 狐狸精 'female spirit', *fu11li11ma24* transformed its original meaning into an opprobrious expression specifically referring to a shameless paramour who has illegal love affairs with a married man. The narrowing semantic change is resulted from language contact between Hakka and Mandarin in the younger generation. In Example (2), *tshit2ngie5pan55iam24kie24* 七月半个閹雞 'castrated chicken of July 15th' means a person who has no awareness of his/her danger. However, with the contact of Southern Min, more and more young Hakka speakers substitute duck for chicken in this proverb. The

Southern Min proverb *tshit-guèh-puànn ah-á— m̄ tsai sí-uà* 七月半鴨仔—毋知死活 ‘duck of July 15th—not knowing death’ has a great impact on the substitution. In a word, Hakka people of the younger generation get more contact with other dialects and languages, not limited in their mother tongue any longer. With the profound influence from other dialects, metaphors in Hakka proverbs undergo changes in a natural way.

(1) 狐狸 嫫
fu11li11 ma24
 fox female
 A woman who speaks unrealistically and unreliably.

(2) 七月半个 閹 雞
tshit2ngie5pan55 iam24 kie24
 July 15th castrated chicken
 A person who has no awareness of his/her danger.

Second, semantic change of metaphors in Hakka proverbs is related to social change. Hakka elders lived a life of agriculture; hence, many cultivation-related animals and plants would be borrowed as metaphors. However, as our society develops into a modern, commercial and industrial one, young Hakka generation bear little background knowledge and few experiences of early lifestyles. As a consequence, some metaphors derived from agricultural concepts cannot cause consonance in young people’s mind. Gradually, those metaphors change or even lose their metaphorical meanings and functions when passed on to the new generation. Example (3) below shows this semantic change.

In Example (3), *mo11phi55ngiu11* 無鼻牛 ‘ox without nose ring’ refers to a savage child. It is because in the early times, only adult oxen wore nose rings and indicted the oxen were tamed. Contrarily, calves wore no rings and they were also wild and easily lost temper. As our society develops, oxen are not widely raised for cultivation. Since young people lack the related perception, the metaphor *mo11phi55ngiu11* is almost gone in the young generation’s language use.

(3) 無 鼻 牛。
mo11 phi55 ngiu11
 no nose ring ox
 A savage child.

5. Discussion

Animal and plant metaphors referring to humans in Hakka proverbs have been discussed on the notion of semantic change, from the perspectives of prototypical effects and cultural influence. It is indicated that prototypes of animals and plants have undergone very minor variation for two generations. One reason may be that the animals and plants adopted in the current study, such as dogs and trees, are very common objects and have long existed in our everyday lives; therefore,

people might take their prototypical features for granted. In general, the relationship between metaphorical meanings in Hakka proverbs and prototypical effects of animals/plants maintain a stable status; that is, semantic change with regard to metaphorical referents is slight in two generations.

As far as familiarity and daily usage frequency of animal/plant metaphors are concerned, the present study provides evidence that the less frequently elder people utter metaphors in Hakka proverbs, the more unfamiliar with the metaphors young people get. Due to the phenomenon, some metaphors gradually change or even lose their meanings and functions. Moreover, cultural and social changes bring about semantic change of metaphors as well. Take Examples (1) and (3) for instance. In Example (1), fu11li11ma24 狐狸嬖 ‘female fox’, affected by the Mandarin term hu2li2jing1 狐狸精 ‘female spirit’, narrowed its original meaning and transformed into a more insulting expression. In Example (3), mo11phi55ngiu11 無鼻牛 ‘ox without nose ring’ is almost gone in the young generation’s language use because of social change.

There is also one linguistic phenomenon revealed through the present data of animal/plant metaphors—cognitive economy. In other words, metaphors facilitate cognition in communication; in the meantime, cognitive economy is often accompanied with the effects of humor, vividness, euphemism, etc. For example, such metaphors as la55phu11sok5 爛瓠杓 ‘bad bottle-gourd scoop’, vu24sim24tshoi55theu11 烏心菜頭 ‘black-hearted radish’, and tshiang24miang24kieu31 青盲狗 ‘blind dog’ respectively refer to an unqualified husband, a hypocritical person, and an ungrateful guy. Those three examples illustrate that metaphors are used for cognitive economy, as well as for intriguing and euphemistic expressions.

6. Conclusion

This study focuses on semantic change of metaphors in Hakka proverbs from prototypical concepts and cultural variation. The results offer some explanations of Hakka people’s reception of certain animals and plants in different generations. On semantic change of metaphors in Hakka proverbs, we indicate that prototypical features of animals and plants actually underwent very minor disparities in the younger generation. However, elder people’s habits of language use play a significant part in the young people’s familiarity and daily usage frequency of those valuable Hakka proverbs. In addition, cultural change—language contact between Hakka and Mandarin or between Hakka and Southern Min, and social change—from an agricultural society to a modern high-tech one, are both influential in semantic change of metaphors.

In conclusion, this study can be taken not only as a reflection of semantic change of metaphors, but also as a reminder that more emphasis should be placed on young people’s Hakka learning. With mother tongues being advocated countrywide, proverbs should not be neglected because they are part of valuable heritage passed on from generation to generation.

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Appendix: 2 Questionnaires

Questionnaire 1

客家俗諺中動植物隱喻的語言使用與文化意涵

【基本資料】

1. 性別： 男 女
2. 年齡： 26-30 31-35 36-40 41-45
 46-50 51-55 56-60 其他 _____
3. 學歷： 小學 國中 高中職 專科
 大專(學) 碩士 博士 其他 _____
4. 職業： 公 教 工 商 農
 醫 軍 製造業 服務業 家管
 已退休(原職 _____) 其他 _____
5. 母語： 客語 閩南語 國語 其他 _____
6. 語言使用：(請依照日常生活使用頻率，最高者標示 1、其次標示 2、最低者標示 3)
 客語 閩南語 國語 其他：_____ (請註明)
7. 於客語地區居住時間： < 1 年 1~5 年 6~10 年
 11~15 年 16~20 年 21~25 年
 26~30 年 > 30 年

【說明】

以下共有三十則客家諺語，皆採用動物或植物的譬喻用法，第 1 至第 20 則為動物隱喻、第 21 至 30 則為植物隱喻，請依據個人日常生活觀察及語言使用習慣，對每一則諺語進行相關評估。

【請直接圈選數字】

- (1) 「熟悉指數」：1 分代表從未聽過 → 5 分代表非常熟悉。
- (2) 「適切指數」：以各諺語中的動植物意涵為依據，1 分代表非常不適合 → 5 分代表非常適合。
- (3) 「日常使用頻率」：以個人語言使用習慣為主，1 分代表從未使用過 → 5 分代表很常使用。

	諺語 (括號內為諺語中畫底線詞彙 之寓意)	熟悉指數					適切指數					日常使用頻率				
		沒聽過	→			很熟悉	不適合	→			很適合	未曾	→			很高
1	<u>懶牛</u> 多屎尿。 (懶人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2	牛欄肚鬥 <u>牛嬲</u> 。 (自家人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3	<u>好鬥牛</u> 。 (喜歡爭執不服輸的人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4	<u>慢牛</u> 食渾水。 (動作慢的人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5	<u>無鼻牛</u> 。 (野孩子)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6	<u>狐狸嬲</u> 。 (說話不切實際的女人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
7	<u>青盲狗</u> 。 (忘恩負義的人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
8	<u>掌門狗</u> 。 (掌門的人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
9	<u>暮固狗</u> 咬死人。 (沉默寡言的人/深藏不露的人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
10	<u>好狗</u> 不擋路， <u>好貓</u> 管三家。 (負責盡職的人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
11	<u>惡馬</u> 惡人騎。 (粗鄙的惡人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
12	<u>濫馬</u> 也有一步踢。 (才能平庸的人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
13	<u>青面鳥</u> 。 (動不動就翻臉的人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
14	<u>鳥仔無毛</u> 年紀老一少年老成。 (未成熟的小孩)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
15	<u>目睡鳥</u> 自有飛來蟲， <u>青盲貓</u> 自有死老鼠。 (運氣好的人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
16	捉 <u>貓子</u> 看 <u>貓嬲</u> 。 (女兒)；(母親)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
17	<u>過家貓</u> 。 (喜歡串門子的媳婦)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
18	<u>七月半的閻雞</u> 。 (不知死活的人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
19	<u>歪嘴雞</u> 簡食穀。 (自身條件不佳的人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
20	嫁 <u>雞</u> 隨 <u>雞</u> ，嫁 <u>狗</u> 隨 <u>狗</u> ，嫁 <u>狐狸</u> 滿山走。 (丈夫)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
21	奈 <u>冬瓜</u> 唔何，捉 <u>瓠瓜</u> 來拔毛。	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

	(能力較強者) ; (弱者)			
22	<u>枯樹</u> 竹出好筍。 (平庸的父母) (優秀的兒女)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
23	惜 <u>花</u> 連盆, 惜子連孫。 (受珍愛的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
24	<u>軟柿子</u> 較好食。 (好欺負的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
25	揀揀挑挑, 挑到 <u>爛瓠杓</u> 。 (條件差的對象)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
26	<u>苦瓜</u> 按苦共條 <u>藤</u> , 兄弟精慙共父母。 (兄弟手足) ; (父母親)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
27	<u>藤</u> 生 <u>樹</u> 死纏到死, <u>藤</u> 死 <u>樹</u> 生死也纏。 (對愛情堅貞、有始有終的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
28	<u>爛菜籃</u> 一壞底。 (本質就不好的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
29	<u>大樹</u> 礮死 <u>草</u> 一大食細。 (強者) ; (弱者)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
30	<u>烏心菜頭</u> 一烏心好面皮。 (表面和善而內心狠毒的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Questionnaire 2

客家俗諺中動植物隱喻的語意變遷

【基本資料】

1. 性別： 男 女
2. 年齡： 15-20 21-25 26-30 其他 _____
3. 學歷： 國中 高中職 專科 大專(學)
 碩士 其他 _____
4. 職業： 學生 其他 _____
5. 母語： 客語 閩南語 國語 其他 _____
6. 語言使用：(請依照日常生活使用頻率，最高者標示 1、其次標示 2、最低者標示 3)
 客語 閩南語 國語 其他：_____ (請註明)
7. 於客語地區居住時間： < 1 年 1~5 年 6~10 年
 11~15 年 16~20 年 > 20 年

【說明】

以下共有三十則客家諺語，皆採用動物或植物的譬喻用法，第 1 至第 20 則為動物隱喻、第 21 至 30 則為植物隱喻，請依據個人日常生活觀察及語言使用習慣，對每一則諺語進行相關評估。

【請直接圈選數字】

- (1) 「熟悉指數」：1 分代表從未聽過 → 5 分代表非常熟悉。
- (2) 「適切指數」：以各諺語中的動植物意涵為依據，1 分代表非常不適合 → 5 分代表非常適合。
- (3) 「日常使用頻率」：以個人語言使用習慣為主，1 分代表從未使用過 → 5 分代表很常使用。

※ 1. 若選擇「適切指數」1 與 2 者，請在標號①畫線部分填入更適合的動植物；

※ 2. 若選擇「日常使用頻率」1 與 2 者，請在標號②畫線部分填入一個日常溝通中最常使用的替代修飾詞彙。

	諺語 (括號內為諺語中畫底線詞彙 之寓意)	熟悉指數					適切指數					日常使用頻率						
		沒 聽 過	→	熟 悉	不 適 合	→	很 適 合	未 曾	→	很 高								
1	懶牛多屎尿。 (懶人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	① _____	1	2	3	4	5	② _____
2	牛欄肚鬥牛嬲。 (自家人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	① _____	1	2	3	4	5	② _____
3	好鬥牛。 (喜歡爭執不服輸的人)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	① _____	1	2	3	4	5	② _____

4	慢牛 食渾水。 (動作慢的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
5	無鼻牛 。 (野孩子)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
6	狐狸嬭 。 (說話不切實際的女人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
7	青盲狗 。 (忘恩負義的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
8	掌門狗 。 (掌門的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
9	墓固狗 咬死人。 (沉默寡言的人/深藏不露的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
10	好狗 不擋路, 好貓 管三家。 (負責盡職的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
11	惡馬 惡人騎。 (粗鄙的惡人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
12	濫馬 也有一步踢。 (才能平庸的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
13	青面鳥 。 (動不動就翻臉的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
14	鳥仔無毛 年紀老一少年老成。 (未成熟的小孩)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
15	目睡鳥 自有飛來蟲, 青盲貓 自有死老鼠。 (運氣好的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
16	捉 貓子 看 貓嬭 。 (女兒); (母親)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
17	過家貓 。 (喜歡串門子的媳婦)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
18	七月半的閻雞 。 (不知死活的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
19	歪嘴雞 簡食穀。 (自身條件不佳的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
20	嫁 雞 隨 雞 , 嫁 狗 隨 狗 , 嫁 狐狸 滿山走。 (丈夫)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____

21	奈 <u>冬瓜</u> 唔何，捉 <u>瓠瓜</u> 來拔毛。 (能力較強者)；(弱者)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
22	<u>枯圖竹</u> 出 <u>好筍</u> 。 (平庸的父母) (優秀的兒女)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
23	惜 <u>花</u> 連盆，惜子連孫。 (受珍愛的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
24	<u>軟柿子</u> 較好食。 (好欺負的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
25	揀揀挑挑，挑到 <u>爛瓠杓</u> 。 (條件差的對象)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
26	<u>苦瓜</u> 按苦共條 <u>藤</u> ，兄弟精憨共父母。 (兄弟手足)；(父母親)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
27	<u>藤生樹</u> 死纏到死， <u>藤死樹</u> 生死也纏。 (對愛情堅貞、有始有終的人)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
28	<u>爛菜籃</u> 一壞底。 (本質就不好的人)	1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	0 1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
29	<u>大樹</u> 礮死 <u>草</u> —大食細。 (強者)；(弱者)	1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	0 1 2 3 4 5 ② _____
30	<u>烏心菜頭</u> —烏心好面皮。 (表面和善而內心狠毒的人)	1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5 ① _____	0 1 2 3 4 5 ② _____

客家話成語中的典型認知與文化意含

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本文的主旨在於分析客語的動物和植物諺語，從熟悉度、適切度、和日常使用頻率出發，希望藉由 Rosch 和 Mervis (1975) 所提出的原型理論來找尋譬喻指涉的語意變化，更進一步期望能從而認識到客家社會如何體現這樣的典型認知與可能的變遷。我們調查 24 位以客語為母語的受試者，將其分為「年輕與年長」這兩個世代。每一位受試者皆需完成一份共 30 則動、植物諺語的問卷調查。研究分析的結果顯示客家諺語中以動物和植物做為隱喻的典型認知特色，在年長與年輕的兩個世代間並無顯著的變化，並且年長者的語言使用習慣在年輕族群的母語學習上扮演著重要的角色。典型的認知為我們保存了跨世代的語言習慣，譬喻在語言變化中的表現也讓我們看見語言接觸與社會發展的息息相關。

關鍵詞：語意變遷、比喻詞、原型、認知、認知經濟

