# It Is What It Isn't: An Exploration of Metaphorical Difficulties for Korean Cross-cultural Language Learners of English

**Chris Young,** Ras Al Khaimah Women's Campus, Higher Colleges of Technology, Ras Al Khaimah, UAE
cyoung1@hct.ac.ae

**Abstract**

The research in this paper is aimed at exploring some of the common difficulties associated with cross-cultural understanding of metaphors by Korean learners of English. University-aged students of intermediate to upper-intermediate English levels in Korea were asked to watch a clip from The Daily Show with Jon Stewart and analyze the metaphor used within. Students completed two surveys in which they were asked to complete metaphor topics given a specific vehicle from the video clip as well as identifying given metaphors as valid or anomalous. The results indicate that while students were able to understand which examples were actually valid metaphors, their ability to complete the topical half of a given metaphor was generally inaccurate. The major sources of difficulty stem from an inability to process metaphors in real time and from a lack of shared references between the two cultures.

**Keywords:** metaphor, cross-cultural, Jon Stewart, survey, Korea

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## 1. Introduction

In 1977 musician Neil Young sang:

> Love is a rose but you better not pick it.
>
> It only grows when it's on the vine.
>
> Handful of thorns and you know you've missed it.
>
> You lose your love when you say the word "mine."

At the time and according to many people, this would have been an example of metaphor used in a flowery way and, as Vanparys (1984) says, "…peripheral…for aesthetic purposes and resulting in deviant language" (p. 1). Prior to *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) it was the common belief by philosophers, linguists and others interested in the topic that metaphor was strictly a literary device and not the language of the ordinary, but rather the extraordinary (ibid.: 1). However, it is now widely claimed that metaphor is no longer viewed as merely a matter of language, but instead metaphor is an indispensable part of our thought and reasoning process, and not simply a figure of speech that we may or may not use (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff & Turner 1989; Gibbs 1994; Kövecses 2010). Sweetster (1990) goes on to say that even the ordinary words we

use in our everyday lives contain metaphors. In fact, "on average, one in every seven and a half lexical units" were related to metaphor in the corpus analyzed by Steen et al. (2010).

It is mainly due to this "centrality of metaphor" as Low (1988, p. 127) states which gives serious rise to the need for English learners to show advanced ability in metaphor comprehension and production (Deignan et al, 1997; Littlemore, 2001a; Littlemore and Low, 2006; Boers, 2000). And learners need only look to Kövecses (2010) to see the fates of those whose grasp of conceptual metaphor was not on a par with Oedipus's. If you'll recall from the myth, Oedipus, having been threatened with death for providing a wrong answer, is asked by the Sphinx to answer the riddle "Which is the animal that has four feet in the morning, two at midday, and three in the evening?" While it is highly unlikely that a student of English will face the threat of death due to their problems with metaphor, the importance as shown above is great.

What kind of difficulty, then, could we expect for learners of English to experience in trying to understand a text comprised mainly of extended metaphor? First, some basic definitions of different aspects of metaphor, namely conceptual metaphor and linguistic metaphor, are given, followed by an introduction of several known difficulties involved with the acquisition of metaphors encountered by cross-cultural students of English. Next, while Mr. Young's music may appeal to some, many current university-aged students might fail to see its appeal. Therefore, an analysis of the metaphors involved in a more recent and culturally relevant transcript taken from the Daily Show with Jon Stewart is given along with some possible learner difficulty. Lastly, the paper will attempt to reveal problems which English learners (particularly Korean students of English) might face when confronted with the aforementioned video. The results of a survey given to 23 Korean university students will be evaluated and used to give further evidence of learners' difficulties.

## 2. Defining metaphor

In general, metaphor can be defined as "Treating x as if it were, in some ways y" (Low, 1988, p. 126). Low goes on to say "x is y" can often times be expressed as a proposition, such as "love is a rose" (ibid.: p. 126). In this situation "love" is regarded as the "topic" and "plant (rose)" the "vehicle."  It is necessary now to introduce the term "ground" as it is the common aspects shared by the topic and the vehicle. It should be noted that target domain and source domain can be substituted for topic and vehicle respectively (Littlemore, 2001; Littlemore and Low, 2006; Kövecses, 2010).

Before definitions of conceptual metaphor and linguistic metaphor are given a few more basic properties of metaphor should first be introduced.  Firstly, in the above proposition it is important to note that only *certain* aspects of Y are transferred to X to then give more understanding of the nature of X. If it were a complete transfer then the statement would change from one of metaphor to one of synonymity (Low, 1988, p. 126; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).  Next, more often than not an abstract concept is used as the target while a concept which is more concrete or physical is employed as the source (Kövecses, 2010). When we think of a metaphor as a means of gaining a better understanding of one thing in terms of another thing then the above statement becomes rather obvious. Our experiences in the real, physical world help us to develop an understanding of

the things we cannot otherwise experience through direct contact (ibid.: p. 7). Because of this, the idea of reversibility of target domain and source domain in the use of everyday metaphors is highly seldom (ibid.). Try to imagine if you will "a rose is love."

## 2.1. Conceptual metaphor vs. Linguistic metaphor

Kövecses (2010) defines conceptual metaphor as "understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain" (p. 4). Littlemore and Low (2006) take this a step further by claiming:

> Successful metaphor comprehension and production involves the ability to understand one entity in terms of another (apparently unrelated) entity (p. 269).

Here they stress the importance that the two domains involved need not seem similar at all.

The oft repeated term "understand" in the above quotes has its limitations. It is better to think of this as a set of ideas, actions, properties, etc. in the source domain which can then be mapped on to corresponding ones in the target domain (Kövecses, 2010). Thus, conceptual metaphor can be seen as a cross-domain mapping between two different concepts (Lakoff 1987). Conceptual metaphors should not be viewed solely as a matter of language, however. They embody a much deeper-seated idea that the processes of human thought are largely conceptual (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). We as humans do not speak using metaphors to formulate our concepts. We conceptualize metaphors so that we might speak of them (ibid.). These linguistic manifestations of conceptual metaphors are referred to as linguistic metaphors (Kövecses, 2010).

Deignan et al. (1997) characterize linguistic metaphors as "the spoken or written realizations of a conceptual metaphor". So then, linguistic metaphors are expressions, vocabulary, terminology, etc. which are thought to exist solely in the realm of the source domain, but are then applied through cross-domain mapping to the target domain. In the course of a written or spoken text these linguistic metaphors may seem out of place or to have a more concrete meaning (and they most certainly do). However, it is our experience involving the target domain which allows us to make the connection (hopefully) between the source and the target domains (Littlemore and Low, 2006, p. 270; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

As an example let us now look back to our initial conceptual metaphor posited by Young that "love is a rose." To give us more of a general conceptual metaphor let's make a slight adjustment from "rose" to "plant" yielding "love is a plant." To be clear, this is not a statement of language, but a statement of our concepts regarding our experience with the abstract notion of love and our more concrete, physical notions of plants. If we believe this conceptual metaphor to be true then we should find no troubles in using linguistic metaphorical expressions to realize it. Most readers will surely agree that this realization can be achieved by expressions such as:

> Our love *grows* stronger every day.

> Their relationship is really *blossoming* into something special.

My love for her is still *budding*.

It is not difficult to see that the language normally reserved for plant life i.e. "grows," "blossoming" and "budding" can be (in our culture anyway) adapted to our experience with love quite easily.

A final thought on the topic of conceptual and linguistic metaphor might bring this all around full circle for language learners. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) first state that:

> Because the metaphorical concept is systematic, the language we use to talk about that aspect of the concept is systematic (p. 7)

They later state:

> The most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture (p.22).

These two statements, when combined, should prompt us to seriously consider the importance of metaphor in the study of language and, for the purposes of this paper, English in particular. For if the most basic values of a culture which are so connected to the metaphorical concepts of the culture (which are systematic) can be understood by the learner, then it follows that learning the language used in the realization of those concepts (also systematic) can be more easily achieved. Simply put, learning the conceptual metaphors of a culture facilitates the learning of the language connected with those same metaphors. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) feel that linguistic metaphorical expressions can be used to "study the nature of metaphorical concepts and to gain an understanding of the metaphorical nature of our activities" (p. 7). While this is certainly a compelling and intuitive argument, the validity of the above reversal should also be investigated.

Having now given a working definition of metaphor some of the cross-cultural difficulties encountered by learners of English when studying them will be explained.

## 3. Cross-cultural difficulties in learning metaphor in English

In Deignan et al. (1997) the claim is made that while all natural languages contain metaphor, with some languages and cultures sharing a commonality with respect to some conceptual metaphors, "not all linguistic or conceptual metaphors will be shared by any two languages" (p. 353). Littlemore and Low (2006) go on to claim that due to the sheer volume of metaphors faced by learners nearly constant metaphoric connections between ideas will have to be made (p. 271). This necessity along with a lack of commonality among languages prompts us to consider the difficulties students could possibly encounter while developing strategies to not only understand metaphors, but put them into practice "if they hope to be seen as competent users of the language" (Low, 1988, p. 129).

Low puts forth a series of skills concerning metaphor of which native-level speakers should have a competent grasp (ibid.). It should stand to reason that the converse of these statements or the inability to comprehend or exercise the expected skills and abilities could be seen as difficulties. The following is a list of six problems with very brief explanations based on the original given by Low (1988):

(a) Inability to construct plausible meanings—learners cannot make sense of the apparent anomalies and contradictions necessary in metaphor

(b) Lack of knowledge of the boundaries of conventional metaphor—learners are not sure of the source's intentions (i.e. serious, humorous, insulting, etc.)

(c) Unaware of acceptable topic and vehicle combinations—learners choose combinations that lead to unacceptable and incomprehensible metaphors

(d) Inability to interpret and make appropriate us of adverbials—learners confuse or mistake the meaning of a word like "literally" in statements such as "I literally jumped out of my seat." In this situation the speaker's intention might not be literal at all.

(e) Unaware of "socially sensitive" metaphors—learners are unsure or oblivious to metaphors which could touch on a sore spot for certain portions of a culture's population

(f) Inability to understand metaphors on multiple levels—learners overlook other hidden metaphors contained in single statements (thereby missing the point or joke as well)

Littlemore and Low (2006) address another problematic situation faced by language learners involving the processing of linguistic expressions. There is a rapid and near automatic processing of established expressions by native speakers without the need to reference meanings and concepts on which the expressions are built (ibid.: p. 272). This is contrary to the situation of language learners who must, due to lack of knowledge of standard meanings, spend time and effort processing the expressions (ibid.). Thus, learners are faced, when listening in real-time, with the problem of not only processing the vocabulary they hear, but then also cross-referencing those words with known concepts and bases to try to make them comprehensible.

One final cause of difficulty for nonnative learners of English, which will be crucial to the analysis of the problems in students' understanding of the metaphors presented in the Jon Stewart clip, is that of a lack of shared references between the two cultures (Lantolf 1999 cited in Littlemore and Low, 2006). Without the necessary background knowledge (in this instance the knowledge of the 2008 TARP governmental bailouts in the United States along with other political information surrounding the time) seemingly obvious connections will not be made due simply to the fact that students have no frame of reference for the metaphors they are confronted with.

The importance for language learners to develop the ability to grasp metaphorical concepts of their target language has already been shown. Here some of the difficulties have been laid out. The student surveys detailed below seek to answer questions regarding certain aspects of these difficulties. They will specifically look at the questions: How well can Korean students detect anomaly or contradiction in seeming metaphors? How well can Korean students identify topics for given vehicles while watching a video clip in real time? If there are significant problems in doing this, do the difficulties stem from linguistic sources or are they more related to a lack of shared references/cultural knowledge?

Next, let us turn our attention to a selected text chosen specifically for its abundance of metaphor. We will analyze the metaphors and metonymies involved, and discuss the difficulties these might present to L2 learners of English.

**4. Metaphor as found in a clip from the Daily Show with Jon Stewart**

This particular clip was chosen due to its use of extended metaphor in a decidedly political piece. A description of the show from thedailyshow.com (2011) says:

> The Daily Show is an Emmy and Peabody Award-winning program that takes a reality-based look at news, trends, pop culture, current events, politics, sports and entertainment with an alternative point of view. In each show, anchorman Jon Stewart and a team of correspondents comment on the day's stories, employing actual news footage, taped field pieces, in-studio guests and on-the-spot coverage of important news events (Comedy Central, 2011)

The show is generally rich with metaphor and this particular episode chosen is no exception. The clip has a run-time of 2 minutes and 23 seconds and is comprised of 438 total words. Below is the text of the clip with the metaphors highlighted:

**Transcript from the Daily Show with Jon Stewart with metaphors highlighted**

Let's think about our country as a family. It's just like a family. So here's our country. [Displays picture of typical American family…mom, dad, and three kids standing in front of a typical American house.] Let's say our country's house is hit by a tornado. [Same picture displayed, but now house is destroyed] Wow. We'd love to be able to rebuild our country, but dad you've been unemployed for five months now and mom your two jobs haven't really gotten us much (inaudible)…And those three freeloaders in front of you aren't really chipping in. Expecting you to do everything and redistribute the wealth to them. SOCIALISTS! We're screwed. There's nothing we can do. [Hand clap] Grandma! Cantor voted for Ryan's Medicare change. So, rather than pay for all of grandma's medicine and food we'll just kick in a little bit at the beginning of the year and…you know…she'll make it work. In some ways we're doing her a favor. She doesn't want to die with us resenting her. [Grandma falls over, apparently dead] Animation! But that still doesn't get us all the money we need. Oh! [Hand clap] Our older brother. I forgot. Gordon. He runs the hedge fund. Maybe he could kick in in(during) this very difficult time. Just a little bit extra. Not a lot. Just a few percentage points. Wouldn't really make a dent in his lifestyle. Not to mention that one time we bailed him out…When he was having financial troubles. You know maybe that plan could work.

> [Cut to news interview with various political figures] Government more and more wants to subsidize failure and the want to punish success./We should be encouraging everyone to be successful. Everyone to be wealthy. Not punish those who achieve success.

Oh, right. Getting them back to the tax rates of the 90's that would be punishing success, whereas grandma and the *quid pro quo* disaster relief thing only punishes age, illness, and misfortune. Um…there is one other possibility. Boy, I hate to even bring this up. I hate to even say it. Can we talk about dad's car? It takes up so much of the family budget. [Displays a tank/fighter jet/Blackhawk hybrid with missiles on the wings parked in front of the family home.] Yeah, um, I really don't know. Boy, I just…You never know when we're going to have to fight the neighbors. But, I mean does it really need to have nuclear capability and stealth

mode? I mean we already killed the kid who egged our house ten years ago and buried him at sea. [In a robotic voice] Metaphor breaking! Must try to extend!

The primary conceptual metaphor in the clip is that of "nation is a family" while the secondary metaphors continue to relate areas of American society with members of a typical American family. The view of the "nation is a family" introduced in this clip cannot be considered the same as that described in Lakoff's *Moral Politics* (1996), which looks at the divergent ideals between conservatives and liberals on the issues of morality and politics through each side's concept of family. The premise in this clip is based on a specific example involving the economic disaster of 2008 and the subsequent aid given to many banks, industries, insurance firms, etc. When juxtaposed with a piece just prior to this on the same show regarding the lack of aid given to the families affected by the Joplin, Missouri tornado in May of 2011, we can see Stewart's cynicism regarding the assistance given to big corporations at the taxpayers' expense while citizens hit with natural disaster receive none.

The understanding of the linguistic metaphors used in this clip might seem quite straightforward for native speakers with some basic knowledge of the economic situation of the time and the response of the U.S. government. However, even native speakers (let alone nonnative learners of English) might have a hard time understanding the linguistic metaphors in total without the appropriate knowledge of background information surrounding those events in 2008. In hindsight, the linguistic metaphors were much more of a challenge than at first believed.

4.1. Description of the metaphors

In this examination of the metaphors used in the article dead metaphors will be overlooked and only those metaphors connected with the "nation is a family" will be discussed.

*(i) Let's think about our nation as a family. It's just like a family.*

Topic: nation

Vehicle: family

Ground:  The complex notion of a nation is being represented by the much more concrete notion of a family. This should be a basic notion in most cultures and therefore not add too much difficulty for students. Different aspects of the nation state will be represented by typical members of a family, i.e. grandparents, parents, siblings and children.

*(ii) Let's say our country's house is hit by a tornado.*

Topic: economic disaster in 2008

Vehicle: tornado

Ground:  In the case of Joplin, Missouri, a tornado was the actual event which took place and Stewart felt the government should help those unfortunate people out. In this "nation is a family" skit the tornado is being used to represent the disaster suffered when the economic bubble burst in 2008 causing many huge corporations to face impending bankruptcy, but which were then given the necessary funds to continue operating by the federal government of the U. S. This metaphor might be possible for nonnative students to understand if they had watched the entire show leading to this skit. The idea of a "tornado" could be strange, however, for even those who know the definition due to the centralized occurrence of them only in the U.S.

*(iii) We'd love to be able to rebuild our country, but dad you've been unemployed for five months now and mom your two jobs haven't really gotten us much (inaudible).*

Topic 1:  unemployed members of the society

Vehicle 1: father

Ground: Here "dad" is used to represent that sector of society hit particularly hard by the economic disaster in 2008 and subsequently forced into unemployment. This should be fairly obvious to nonnative students who watch this clip.

Topic 2:  middle class workers

Vehicle 2:  mother

Ground: By giving "mother" two jobs this would be a clear indication of a middle class family in the U.S. This might not be intuitive for nonnative students particularly those who have stay at home mothers as a rule in their culture.

*(iv) …And those three freeloaders in front of you aren't really chipping in. Expecting you to do everything and redistribute the wealth to them. SOCIALISTS!*

Topic: socialism

Vehicle: children in the family

Ground: It is a common argument in U.S. politics these days that if an individual is not fully supportive of capitalism and against market regulation then they are in favor of an ideology favoring socialism where the wealthy are taxed, large businesses are faced with increased regulations, and loopholes for those same companies are eliminated with the result being a heavier burden on the rich to accommodate the middle and lower classes. Without knowledge of the political discourse common in the U.S. this might be difficult for nonnative students to comprehend. However, in the language of the text it shouldn't be difficult to know that Stewart is referring to the children as socialists.

*(v) Grandma! Cantor voted for Ryan's Medicare change. So, rather than pay for all of grandma's medicine and food we'll just kick in a little bit at the beginning of the year and…you know…she'll make it work.*

Topic: the sick and elderly in society

Vehicle: grandma

Ground: Clearly "grandma's" age would be enough to represent the elderly in society. Her health concerns also address the growing debate in the U.S. regarding loss of benefits and socialized healthcare in general. In cultures where governments have adopted a kind of nationalized system of healthcare this metaphor might not be as powerful, although the idea of grandma representing the elderly should be apparent. As an added note, in Korean society grandparents are very highly regarded and would almost certainly not be portrayed in this light possibly adding to confusion for the Korean learner of English.

*(vi) Our older brother. I forgot. Gordon. He runs the hedge fund. Maybe he could kick in in (during) this very difficult time. Just a little bit extra.*

Topic: Wall St.

Vehicle: our older brother/hedge fund

Ground: Often older brothers can be looked to by younger siblings as a crutch during difficult times. Because the "brother" runs the hedge fund we can assume him to be wealthy and connected in some way to Wall St. While nonnative learners might not know what a hedge fund is it should not be difficult for them to connect it to Wall St. if provided the definition.

*(vii) Not to mention that one time we bailed him out…When he was having financial troubles.*

Topic: Troubled Asset Relief Program bailouts in 2008 of institutions such as AIG, Citigroup and the Goldman Sachs group to name a few.

Vehicle: the time we bailed him out

Ground: The terminology used in both situations (bail out) makes an obvious connection between the topic and the vehicle. In the metaphor bailing out our wealthy brother when he was having trouble should be fairly straightforward as representing the T.A.R.P. bailouts of 2008. In order to understand the metaphor nonnative learners would need some background knowledge of the actions taken following the economic collapse.

*(viii) Can we talk about dad's car? It takes up so much of the family budget.*

Topic: the military budget

Vehicle: dad's car

Ground: Given the information provided in the picture on the video of the Daily Show this connection should not be a difficult one to make. The picture shows an obvious military vehicle while Stewart talks about "dad's car." Korean learners should have a clear idea of the reach of the U.S. military as there are nearly 30,000 American troops stationed in South Korea.

*(ix) You never know when we're going to have to fight the neighbors.*

Topic: war with other countries in the world

Vehicle: fight the neighbors

Ground:  Given the previous metaphor regarding "dad's car" and "nation as a family" it is not too much of a stretch to assume that those families surrounding us would be other nations in the extended metaphor for nonnative learners.

*(x) I mean we already killed the kid who egged our house ten years ago and buried him at sea.*

Topic 1: 9/11

Vehicle 1: egged our house

Ground: To egg a house in American English means to commit a prank whereby the culprits throw rotten eggs at the home of someone they didn't like. Hardly a nice thing by any standards and can be seen here as the heinous acts which took place on September 11th in New York City.  If students had this vocabulary explained prior to watching it should be simple to extend this to 9/11. Learners from other cultures while being very aware of those events might not be able to make this connection in real-time since its cultural importance for them would most likely be reduced.

Topic 2: Osama bin Laden

Vehicle 2: the kid who egged our house

Ground: Given the information about the metaphor above it is not difficult to understand that the "kid who egged our house" would be the assumed culprit of 9/11. Nonnative speakers should have no problem with this.

Topic 3: the killing of Osama bin Laden in 2011

Vehicle 3: killed the kid who egged our house

Ground: As before due to the exact connection of the vocabulary used in both situations and the knowledge above this is a clear and obvious relationship for speakers of English. The problem as stated before with this sentence is the need to process in quick succession three representations that might need time to retrieve from memory by the nonnative student.

Having explained the uses of metaphor and some possible problems nonnative speakers and in some situations Korean students in particular might encounter, let us turn to the survey experiment to see what the actual difficulties were.

## 5. Student surveys on identifying and understanding metaphor

A survey was conducted in conjunction with the Stewart clip to test ability in interpreting meaning in metaphors. The first test required students to complete the metaphor based on the information

from the clip and their interpretation of what Stewart meant. A second test asked students to evaluate the validity of given metaphors as this has been acknowledged to be one of the language skills native speakers must competently grasp. The certainty to which learners can relate topic and vehicle as plausible or anomalous could give great insight into how well specific cultures are able to conceptually map from certain source domains in their target language. This second test is quite similar to that used in Littlemore (2001b). It should be noted here that this was an informal experiment with the sole purpose of gaining data. Experimental conditions were not used.

5.1. Method

Students were given two tests to address the above questions each while watching the clip previously mentioned from the Daily Show with Jon Stewart. The first test was given prior to the first viewing and the second test was given prior to a second viewing. The clip, some problematic vocabulary and the meaning of metaphor and anomaly were discussed (see Appendix 1) prior to each viewing. However, only vocabulary was explained. Metaphors or possible meanings for metaphors in the text of the clip were not discussed.

5.2. Participants

The participating students were chosen from a summer university English camp in South Korea. They mostly had varying majors and intermediate to upper-intermediate levels of English.

5.3. Tests

5.3.1. Metaphor completion test

In order to evaluate how well students could process the conceptual metaphors from the clip a list of ten incomplete metaphors was given to the students. The vehicle had been completed, but the topic was left blank. Students were told not to create their own metaphors from their own culture, but to decipher the metaphor meant by Stewart (see Appendix 2 for the test). When the first part of the test was completed students were directed to the second part of the test and the clip was replayed.

5.3.2. <u>Metaphor validity test</u>

To evaluate students' ability in distinguishing between what would conventionally be considered metaphor and what would normally be seen as anomaly, a series of statements (see Appendix 3) were given to the students who were then asked to rank them from 4 (pure metaphor) to 1 (pure anomaly).

5.4. <u>Results</u>

For the first test only eight of the 25 students surveyed scored above two on choosing the conceptual topic for the metaphors. One student scored a five while none scored above five. A score of one was achieved by ten students. Only the first question "_____ is a family" was answered correctly by all. Obviously, they understood that "Our nation is a family." However, in nearly every other situation, language found in the actual text was used to complete the metaphor. Examples of this were "kids are freeloaders," "socialist is grandma" and "hedge fund is our older brother." The vast majority could not bring in as a topic new vocabulary not found in the text provided, but all were told specifically to do so. This could be due to the lack of L1 instructions.

On the second test where possible topic and vehicle were both given, students faired far better. Topics which were not mentioned in the text could be easily seen by most students (63%) as clear metaphor while other topics which clearly were not related to the text in the clip were marked as either anomaly or not understood. Only two statements were almost wholly unrelated to the video, namely "war is a tornado" and "Pakistan is stealth mode." Quite contradictory to their lack of conceptualization on the first test nearly all students (88%) marked these statements as clear metaphor, weaker metaphor or unsure though there was no mention of either "war" or "Pakistan" in the clip. No student marked both as anomaly.

While these results show a deep lack of understanding for the examples of linguistic metaphor that were provided, we must bear in mind the common cross-cultural difficulties experienced by learners of English coming across new metaphors as expressed in Section 3. In particular, the problems pointed out by Littlemore and Low regarding difficulty in real-time processing of metaphor and the lack of shared knowledge between that of the economic crisis presented in the clip and the Korean students are of vital importance. While students were given time to read and had key concepts explained, the amount and depth of metaphor was simply too great for them to process in real time. In addition, many of the concepts are simply not shared between the two cultures. The lack of tornadoes in their own country, for example, and the descriptions of Wall Street may be cultural references that the participants simply could not connect with on a linguistic level.

Moreover, a very real possibility of a large disconnect in terms of what "nation as a family" means metaphorically to the two cultures could be at play. While both cultures may identify with the conceptual metaphor, the linguistic manifestations might take on altogether different forms. This could prove to be a significant hindrance to comprehension of metaphors by language learners if

steps are not taken in the classroom to bridge the gap. One way for teachers to do this would be to start with the conceptual metaphor and ask students to offer some of the different ways it is realized linguistically in their L1 given that it exists at all. In a sense, they would be attempting to provide lexical realms where this conceptual metaphor dwelled so to speak. The teacher could then provide a similar set of related vocabulary used in English for the students to compare. By doing this, students could become more aware of some of the differences between how conceptual metaphors are realized in English and their L1.

## 6. Conclusions

The aim of this article was to give the reader an understanding of what metaphor is and some of the common problems nonnative English learners have with developing their ability in understanding and producing metaphors. Korean university students were asked to watch a clip from the Daily Show with Jon Stewart to check for possible problems with linguistic metaphors under the conceptual metaphor of "nation as a family." Subsequently, the students were given two surveys concerning the metaphors from the same clip.

The survey results showed that while most students could accurately evaluate the validity of a given statement as linguistic metaphor or anomaly, the overwhelming majority were unable to complete the topic in the metaphors. Most students used other vocabulary in the transcript to complete the metaphor and could not see the possible representations family could make in the "nation as a family" conceptual metaphor.

This result is due in large part to the extremely high level of metaphor involved with the clip. The difficulty involved was completely underestimated and the challenges encountered by the participants are in hindsight completely understandable. Much of this difficulty, it seems, can be attributed to mainly cultural differences along with a lack of shared references. Practically speaking, this requires steps to be taken for teachers wishing to employ lessons centered on extended metaphor. These steps, like the one previously mentioned, could help in bridging the cultural gap in terms of what things are conventionally allowed to represent each other metaphorically.

A subsequent study using similar methods and more straightforward linguistic metaphors could give more valuable insight into difficulties for learners of English related to understanding these metaphors. Perhaps text requiring much less prior knowledge could be used as well as metaphors that weren't presented in such an extended fashion. A small amount of follow-up research from the participants could go a long way in helping to identify difficulties with metaphor understanding and their causes. It might be highly informative to conduct exit interviews with each of the participants to glean a deeper understanding of the challenges involved in the task.

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**Appendix 1**

**Instruction for Evaluation of Metaphors**

A metaphor is a statement that shows a relationship between two things that are not the same. Sometimes they are very different and sometimes they can be very similar. Many times the relationship between them is not easy to see for English learners.

The sentence "my love is a burning flame" is a very clear metaphor as defined above—love is not fire. However, some qualities of fire/a flame can show us something about love—love is warm, love can begin suddenly, love can end suddenly, if you love the wrong person it can hurt you…

Not all comparisons can be called metaphors though. Take for example the sentence "the book is a mosquito." What can a mosquito tell us about a book? I'm sure you can see that a book/mosquito relationship is difficult to make. Instead of a metaphor, this kind of expression is called an anomaly.

You are going to watch a clip from a popular news/comedy show called the Daily Show with Jon Stewart. You will be asked some questions about the metaphors he uses in the clip. First, you will give your ideas about some of the metaphors by writing the second half of the metaphor yourself. For example, you will read "_____is a family." Then you are asked to write what you think is a good word that relates to "a family." Please keep your answers to less than three words.

In the second part of the survey I ask you to read some metaphors related to the clip and then rate the relationship.

**Appendix 2**

**Metaphor Completion Test**

Fill in the blanks with a word (or words) that you think completes the metaphor from the video clip and gives a clear relationship to the word shown.

1. _____ is a family.

2. _____ is Dad.

3. _____ are "freeloaders."

4. _____ is Grandma.

5. _____ is our older brother, Gordon.

6. _____ is "the time we bailed him out."

7. _____ is Dad's car.

8. _____ is the neighbors.

9. _____ is egging our house 10 years ago.

10. _____ is the kid who egged our house ten years ago.

**Appendix 3**

**Metaphor Validity Test**

Choose the correct number for each metaphor using:

(4) This is definitely a metaphor. The second part of the sentence easily relates to the first part.

(3) This is a weaker metaphor. The two parts of the sentence do not relate clearly.

(2) I am unsure if this is a metaphor or an anomaly.

(1) There is no relationship between the two parts of the sentence. This is an anomaly.

(X) I do not understand one or some of the words in the sentence.


1. Our country is a family.

2. War is a tornado.

3. Unemployed people are dad.

4. Overworked people are mom.

5. Senior citizens are grandma.

6. Socialists are freeloading kids.

7. Wall St. is our older brother Gordon.

8. Government paying to help Wall St. during economic crisis in 2008 is "that time we bailed him (Gordon) out."

9. The military budget is dad's car.

10. Government budget is family budget.

11. War is "fight the neighbors."

12. Pakistan is stealth mode.

13. 9/11 is "egged our house 10 years ago."

14. Osama bin Laden is "the kid who egged our house ten years ago."