

Metaphorical Construction of Self in Teachers' Narratives

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This paper seeks to explore, by studying their personal stories, how Hong Kong secondary school teachers make sense of who and what they are in difficult situations, especially when such situations arise as a consequence of their being a part of the institution of education. Teachers' conceptual mappings of self will be investigated via their linguistic realisations within a context of discourse. Results show that the metaphorical construction of the teacher's self is largely paradoxical. There is co-creation of a negative self and a positive self. For the negative self, the underlying principle for the coherence of the paradoxical metaphors is the highlighting of the negative aspects of the vehicle domains to explain the 'grounds' for understanding the topic in terms of the vehicles. It is constructed out of teachers' encounters with students' discipline problems, poor inter-personal relationships in the school, inadequate managerial skills of the principal and heavy demands of the education authorities. On the other hand, the positive self is constructed through the metaphorical use of reference terms understood on specific cultural basis. It is commitment, care and a great sense of responsibility which resemble those of parents that have helped to motivate and sustain teachers when they face challenges. It is suggested that teachers should be encouraged to share their experience in coping with paradoxical roles and construct a positive self in culturally appropriate terms and live by that self.

Keywords: teachers' narratives, self, metaphor, reference term

Introduction

Narrative is an important expression of meaning. In giving first-person accounts, one is making sense of one's experience and life. In constructing past events and actions, one is claiming an identity and presenting a self (Goffman, 1959; Riessman, 1993), and scholars from various disciplines have treated conversational stories of personal experience as an important site for the social construction of self (e.g. Miller *et al.*, 1990). Elaborating on Mead's conception of the self, Crossley suggests that 'our sense of ourselves is an activity, a process, which comes about through our engagements, relationships and connections with other people' (Crossley, 2000: 12). Therefore, experience of what one did, felt and thought, and how one interacted with other people and the world provides the basis for experiencing oneself, for being aware of oneself, and for constructing oneself in talk. As noted by Holstein and Gubrium (2000: 29), 'Self is that part of communicative action that reflects on itself, either in the course of the inner conversation called thinking or as an openly reflexive product of social interaction'. These processes of self-awareness, self-reflexivity, and self-construction are activities of a conceptual system which is 'fundamentally metaphorical in nature', and as such, most of what we think, experience and do is 'very much a matter of metaphor' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 3).

'Metaphor' means 'a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system' (Lakoff, 1993: 203). It involves understanding one domain of experience in terms of a very different domain of experience, or a mapping from a source domain to a target domain. It is through such cross-domain mappings that human beings make sense of their experience, construct reality and identities. However, a 'metaphor' is to be distinguished from a 'metaphorical expression'. While the former is a conceptual mapping, the latter is 'a linguistic expression (a word, phrase, or sentence) that is the surface realisation of such a cross-domain mapping' (Lakoff, 1993: 203). This paper seeks to explore, by studying their personal stories, how Hong Kong secondary school teachers make sense of who and what they are in difficult situations, especially when such situations arise as a consequence of their being a part of the institution of education. As linguistic choices can 'index culturally constituted evaluations of self' in narratives (Miller *et al.*, 1990: 295), teachers' conceptual mappings of self will be investigated via their linguistic realisations, i.e. their metaphorical expressions, within a context of discourse. Socio-cultural factors such as the participants' backgrounds, roles and expectations, the norms of the speech community and the institutional context are taken into account in the analysis, since they play an important part in activating concepts and in the processing of metaphorical language in discourse (Cameron, 1999a, 1999b).

Background

This study was motivated by the disturbing news reports on teachers' suicides and stress problems in Hong Kong (Wah Kiu Daily, 1994; Wen Wei Po, 1995; Ta Kung Pao, 2000; Ming Pao, 2000; Hong Kong Economic Times, 2000; Sing Tao Daily, 2003). As the function of metaphor is understanding (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), the study of metaphors has been used in education as a way of understanding, experiencing and reflecting on the thoughts and practices in teaching and learning (e.g. Cortazzi, 1991; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). It is hoped that the present analysis of teachers' metaphors may help to explain their understanding of stress at work.

Ten experienced teachers from nine secondary schools in Hong Kong were interviewed in their mother tongue, Cantonese. Their biographical details are shown in Table 1.

It is clear that the small sample does not justify any generalisations to be made about the findings. This is a case study – an attempt to understand the wider problem of teacher stress through an in-depth investigation of a specific group of experienced teachers' responses to specific situations, and not through a survey across a representative sample. It is a useful piece added to 'a mosaic of great complexity and detail', to use Becker's metaphor. It is hoped that 'each piece added to a mosaic adds a little to our understanding of the total picture. When many pieces have been placed we can see, more or less clearly, the objects and the people in the picture and their relation to one another' (Becker, 2000: 80–1).

It is also noted that schools with a large proportion of low-achieving students may be somewhat over-represented. This background may render teachers' stress problem in these schools more acute but it is no less real for the subjects

Table 1 Teacher narrators' biographical details

<i>Teachers' personal details</i>		<i>No. of teachers</i>
Teaching experience	7–8 years	2
	15–20 years	4
	25–30 years	2
	over 30 years	2
*Present School Banding	Band 1	2
	Band 3	8
Subjects taught	English	2
	Chinese	2
	Commercial Studies	2
	Science	4
Sex	Female	6
	Male	4
Marital Status	Single	3
	Married	7

Note: * The secondary schools in Hong Kong are classified into three bandings according to the academic performance of students, Band 1 being the highest, and Band 3 the lowest.

involved. After all, it is precisely the subjective realities presented in narratives which make narrative study meaningful (Riessman, 1993).

Seven of the interviewees had been personally known to the researcher (five being her former colleagues in secondary schools) for a long period of time and the interviews were conducted in an informal setting such as a café or a private home. The remaining three teachers, who also knew each other, shared a mutual friend with the researcher and were interviewed in an empty kindergarten classroom on Saturday afternoon. It seemed that all interviewees were responding to the interview situation in a rather relaxed mood. They were told that the aim of the research was to find out more about secondary school teaching. There was no mention of the intention to study metaphors used in their stories so that less self-conscious responses and more naturalistic language data could be elicited. The interviews were semi-structured and audio-taped. The recorded materials were transcribed and translated into English.

The proposition that one experiences oneself through social interactions (Crossley, 2000) is particularly relevant to the Chinese concept of the self, which is based on the individual's transactions with his/her fellow human beings, the *ren* or *jan* relationships (Hsu, 1985; King & Bond, 1985). The self is seen as being in relation to 'significant others' who are defined as 'individuals in the self's social environment with whom he constantly interacts in various kinds of role relations' (Chu, 1985: 253). Here the teacher's self is perceived to exist in relation to significant others with whom the teacher interacts: principal, colleagues, students and their parents and education authorities. Therefore, the core research question is how the teacher is related to these significant others. To solicit relevant narratives, the researcher adopted and modified Cortazzi's and Labov's questions (Cortazzi, 1991, 1993; Labov, 1972). Labov's question of 'Were you ever in a situation where you were in serious danger of being killed, where you said to yourself – "This is it"?' was designed to elicit a 'yes' or 'no' answer. When the interviewee responded with a 'yes', he committed himself to an elabo-

ration of the details of what had happened which justified his response. When used at an appropriate point of the conversation, this method proved to be quite effective. (For details, see Labov, 1972: 354–5). Cortazzi interviewed 123 British primary teachers and obtained a total of 856 narratives by asking questions related to their day-to-day teaching. Some examples are: ‘What happened yesterday/last week?’ ‘Have any of the children in your class had a breakthrough recently?’ ‘Have you ever had trouble with parents?’ (For details, see Cortazzi, 1993: 118–20). For the present study, the following questions were asked:

- What was last week like, at school and at home?
- Was it a typical week? Did anything unusual happen?
- What are your students like? Have you ever dealt with any difficult students?
- What kind of family background do your students come from? Have you ever encountered any difficult parents?
- Is it easy to get help and support from your principal and colleagues? Have you ever had any trouble with your principal and colleagues?
- What do you do after school and at the weekend? What did you do last weekend?

Metaphors and Metaphorical Expressions

Selection and categorisation

The researcher examined all the transcripts and made a decision about metaphors and metaphorical expressions. Despite its potential risks of subjectivity, recency effect and familiarity (Low, 1999), this ‘unilateral identification’ method was employed. It is the most common approach adopted by other researchers (Low, 1999) probably because it enables the research procedures to be completed efficiently and consistently. As suggested by Cameron (1999b: 107), an initial and necessary condition for the identification of a metaphor is that it contains ‘at least one lexical item (the Vehicle term) referring to an entity, idea, action, etc. (the Topic), and that the Vehicle term belongs to a very different, or incongruous, domain from the Topic.’ In this study, the Vehicle term is a word, a phrase, a sentence or a stretch of language which the teacher narrators use to refer to themselves as individuals or as members of the teaching profession, the school or the institution of education. V-terms may also refer to their actions, feelings and thoughts, and their comments on the activities or events which take place within the school. A crucial criterion for identifying a metaphorical expression is that it refers ‘unconventionally to an object, process or concept, or colligates in an unconventional way’ (Goatly, 1997: 8) and there is an ‘incongruity’ between the Vehicle domain and the Topic domain. However, the unconventionality and incongruity are resolved on the basis of some ‘similarity, matching or analogy’ and some transfer of meaning from the Vehicle domain to the Topic domain, which produces an understanding of the Topic in terms of the Vehicle (Cameron, 1999b; Goatly, 1997). A total of 290 metaphorical expressions were identified as linguistic realisations of conceptual metaphors which teachers used in constructing the self, and are categorised in Table 2.

Table 2 Categorisation of teachers' metaphors

<i>Vehicle domain*</i>	<i>Number of V-term tokens</i>
Physical Force & Fighting	51
Government & Law	39
Religion	21
Business	20
Parts of Body	18
Death	12
Drama	10
Fire, Heat & Light	6
Food	6
Sickness	4
**Family	103 (5 + 98)

Note: *There are certain overlaps in the categorization due to the 'interplay of metaphors' and some metaphors are double-coded. For example, 'selling life' is coded under both Business and Death, when 'compounding', the enclosing of one metaphor inside another already established one, is involved (Goatly, 1997). About 20% of the total count is double-coded.

**This refers to the metaphor of 'School is family'. Most of the metaphorical expressions (98 out of 103) in this category are reference terms for students which embody the metaphor Students are children with the corollary 'Teacher is adult' and 'Teacher is parent'. This vehicle domain carries a special thematic importance and will be discussed in a separate section.

Owing to space constraints, the discussion will be focused on the vehicle domains which have a V-term token number of 20 or more. The domains of physical force and fighting, government and law, religion and business have 131 V-term tokens which make up 70% of the total count (out of 187, family domain excluded). In the examples below, the original expressions in Chinese are based on the *Jyut6Ping3* Romanisation system adopted by the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong, and the words which are put in square brackets are the actual English words used by the speaker.

Construction of a Negative Self

In almost all the metaphors classified in the first four vehicle domains (Table 2), a consistent pattern of mapping antithetical entities, activities, and events of a vehicle domain onto the same topic domain is noted. Table 3 illustrates teachers' construction of a negative self through paradoxical metaphors.

The 'systematicity' of the paradoxical metaphors is a strong indication of the processes of highlighting and hiding at work. As suggested by Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 10), 'The very systematicity that allows us to comprehend one aspect of a concept in terms of another . . . will necessarily hide other aspects of the concept. In allowing us to focus on one aspect of a concept . . . a metaphorical concept can keep us from focusing on other aspects of the concept that are inconsistent with that metaphor.' In the following section, the author will seek to investigate which aspects of self that the teacher-narrators are highlighting and hiding through a linguistic analysis of the paradoxical metaphors.

Table 3 Teachers' paradoxical metaphors

<i>Vehicle domain</i>	<i>Paradox</i>
Physical Force & Fighting	Teacher is an applier of force. Teacher is an object to which force is applied.
Government & Law	Teacher is a law enforcer. Teacher is a prosecutor. Teacher is the accused. Teacher is a criminal.
Religion	Teacher is a god. Teacher is a sacrificial offering. Teacher is a Taoist priest.
Business	Teacher is a businessperson. Teacher is a commodity.

Physical force and fighting

Our bodily experience with physical force has been used as a classic example to illustrate how we make sense of the world and our non-bodily experience. The sense of weight and force-caused movements is metaphorically projected to experience of a non-physical kind (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1993). In telling their stories, teachers use force-related metaphorical expressions to construct a stressed self. Physical force which they have experienced is mapped onto abstract force. As illustrated in the following examples, they construct themselves as both applier and object of physical force and focus on the negative similarities between the Vehicle domain and the Topic domain.

Teacher is driving instructor

Teachers give help and guidance to students so that they will do the right thing. When students do something wrong, teachers take it as their duty to correct them and save them from further mistakes and the dire consequences. However, the interventions are sometimes futile. This is expressed in terms of driving instruction:

Ex. 1 Or maybe I can say I would help to *swerve* him a little bit

(*'lau2me2siu2siu2'* = 'twist and turn sideways a little bit')

so that he won't have a *head-on collision*

(*'zik6zong6gwo3heoi3'* = 'crashing right into it').

That is, if he is *going the wrong way*

(*'hang4co3lou6'* = 'walking on the wrong road'),

he will not *bump into a pit*.

(*'zong6lok6go3tam5'* = 'crash down into a pit').

Ex. 2 There is nothing I can do to *save* them.

(*'maan1'* = 'pull and prevent somebody from falling over the edge').

Ex. 3 It is difficult for me to *turn* a student from bad to good.

(*'lau2faan1zyun3'* = 'twist and make something turn back').

These examples reflect the teachers' experience of their strenuous efforts and the difficulty in rescuing students from poor academic results and bad behaviour.

The efforts are understood in terms of physical actions – pulling, twisting and turning performed on students.

Fighting is a stronger form of using physical force to achieve definite goals. The metaphor of *Teacher is fighter* is quite common in narratives about dealing with ill-behaved students:

Ex. 4 If a naughty boy comes into the teachers' room, several of us will question him, *give him a hard time*, and scold him.

(*'cai3' = 'beat someone'*)

Ex. 5 Or I will *confront them to the utmost*.

(*'caang3dou3hang4' = 'stretch or push back with the greatest force'*)

This metaphor highlights the tense relationship between teachers and students in schools, and is extended to specific domains of Kung Fu (Chinese martial art) and battles.

Teacher is Kung Fu fighter

The metaphor is a mapping of the concepts in Chinese martial art onto the concepts in management within the institution of education. The postures, moves and strategies in dealing with students and teachers are conceptualised in terms of those used in Kung Fu fighting. A teacher interprets a student's attitude to be confrontational by referring to a Kung Fu posture:

Ex. 6 As soon as she got into the classroom, he immediately *confronted* her.

(*'zaat3maa5' = 'a posture of sitting on a horse with two legs set firmly on the ground'*).

'Zaat3maa5' is the initial posture which a Kung Fu fighter makes to firmly establish his/her physical base and get ready to strike. When students '*zaat3maa5*', the teacher is supposed to be alerted to any possible attack and make an effective move or fight back. The metaphor positions the student as the one who sets up the classroom as a fighting field and the one who forces the role of a Kung Fu fighter upon the teacher. This reflects a common stressful situation when a teacher is confronted with hostile students. Another term used within this metaphorical schema is '*ziu1sou3*' which refers to the move or strategy used to defeat the opponent. A teacher uses it to refer to the effective methods which he has learned from the senior teachers of the school to deal with naughty students.

Ex. 7 I learnt their *effective methods*.

(*'ziu1sou3' = 'a combating move in martial art'*)

The concept of engaging in Kung Fu fighting is not only applied to the micro level of classroom management, but also to a higher institutional level. A teacher uses '*ziu1*', the abbreviated form of '*ziu1sou3*' to refer to an implicit disciplinary measure which could be taken by the authorities against poorly performing teachers.

Ex. 8 Well, *the most that government schools can do* is to transfer you.

(*'zeoi3lek1go2ziu1' = 'the best combating move that one can make in martial art'*)

Just as participants of a Kung Fu fight, teachers exercise physical force by initiating it and by responding to it.

Teacher is military personnel

The teacher is perceived to be fighting against different forces, and in doing so, assuming different military roles. The first role is frontline soldiers and the classroom is seen as the battlefield. Just as soldiers need to be mobilised effectively in order to control strategic points in a battlefield and succeed in military aims, teachers have to be deployed to take control of the classroom and badly behaved students in order to achieve pedagogic goals. Here is an example which shows that one of the enemies whom the teachers have to fight against is their students.

Ex. 9 Then because they were badly behaved, the school found that it might be better to group them in one class, and *assign more teachers to supervise/control them.*

(*'zju3cung5bing1' = 'station massive forces'*)

Rather than fighting against the same enemy and sharing the same military goals with teachers, the school is depicted in some narratives as teachers' own enemy. A teacher tells how she and one of her colleagues worked together in defying the school authorities and bringing about new changes in school policy. She refers to themselves as *'can1mat6zin3jau5'* which means *'close comrades-in-arms'*. This likens soldiers' shared enterprise of achieving the same military goal to that of teachers' striving for what they believe to be important. The teacher narrator further conceptualises the teachers' solidarity in the vehicle domain of physical force by describing how they *'caang3zju6go3tin1'*, which literally means *'hold the sky'*. The reference to holding the sky entails holding it from falling, which may be diversely mapped onto the topic domain. When the sky falls on the teachers who hold it, it is a disaster that is mapped onto the dire consequences which they have to face in defying the authorities. On the other hand, the sky might fall on the world if the teachers did not hold it. In this case, they withhold the disastrous effects which unwise school policies may produce on students and teachers. In both mappings, the expression *'caang3zju6go3tin1'* foregrounds the pressure and risks posed to the teachers when they insist on doing what they believe is right and at the same time highlights their bravery and professionalism.

In different situations, a teacher has a different military role and a different enemy. For instance, organising the School Open Day is conceived as fighting a public image war. The teacher who is given the special duty of organising it is perceived as a commander-in-chief. According to the teacher narrator, just a few days before the school's Open Day, the principal found that the event had been poorly prepared. However, he did not deem it wise to *'zan6cin4 jik6seoi3'*, literally meaning *'replacing the commander-in-chief with another person at the battle-front, when the battle is about to begin'*, i.e. ask another teacher to do the job.

The foregoing examples construct the teachers' use of physical force whereas the following metaphors present their subjection to physical force.

Teacher is load bearer

As in English, physical loads are mapped onto responsibilities which one has to bear.

Ex. 10 I will *take up the responsibility* and do it first.
(*'me1' = 'carry something or somebody on the back'*)

- Ex. 11 So one thing was, he *put all the blame on me*.
 ('zoeng1di1je5se3lok6ngo5dou6' = 'unload these things onto me').

Teacher is object

Physical force is mapped onto the jealousy and hostility of other teachers which turn the victim into an object.

- Ex. 12 So he *put words in my mouth*.
 ('wat1' = 'bend something')
- Ex. 13 I try my best to *keep all my work, my feelings and thoughts to myself*.
 ('sau1maai4zi6gei2' = 'hide and put myself in a secret place')

The Chinese word 'wat1' has the meaning of bending something so as to change its shape or to break it. When used metaphorically by the Cantonese speakers in Hong Kong, it means setting somebody up or deliberately and wrongly accusing an innocent person. The teacher in Ex.12 used this word to describe how she had been unfairly treated by her colleagues. The self here is depicted as an object subjected to external physical force which changes its shape against its will. Another teacher also seems to have force applied to the self, but in this case (Ex.13), the force is self-inflicted. She takes the self as an object, puts it away and hides it from public view because she wants to keep a low profile of her high performance in the school and avoid the jealousy of her colleagues. The concept of *Teacher is object* to which force is applied is further refined and developed in the metaphor of *Teacher is target for archery*. A teacher becomes the target of attack by other teachers when s\he gains the trust of the principal. This is how two teachers feel about getting a new functional title and by being asked to carry out unpopular measures such as checking how other teachers mark their students' assignments. One of them is warned against being 'zung3ci2 zi1dik1', an idiom meaning 'the target for all arrows' and the other worries about 'zou6zin3baa2', i.e. 'becoming the target for archery'.

Government and law

As in the domain of physical force and fighting, the linguistic expressions used by the teacher narrators embody a dominant metaphor – the construction of paradoxical selves: law enforcer and law breaker.

Teacher is law enforcer

The following extract is taken from a narrative about a disruptive boy who went out of control. The teacher asked the class monitor to get the Discipline Master to come and deal with him so that she could go on teaching. The disruptive boy made verbal threats to the class monitor and warned him not to go. The teacher insisted that the monitor had no choice but carry out her demand. The story goes on:

- Ex. 14

The class monitor, the class monitor went out. Well, he went out for a while. After a while he came back, looking very happy. Then he said he couldn't find the Discipline Master. I, he was actually very happy and relieved that he couldn't find him. Then, at that time, I said, ' [OK], ' but I couldn't let it go. The other kid was already very arrogant. He was saying

swear words and the like, so I said, I said, 'Since you can't find him, I said, 'OK, go and get the principal'. I said, 'Go and ask the principal to come. Go'. Then the naughty boy said immediately, 'Do you need to blow it up like this?' That's what it was like. I said, 'Yes, you see, 'gaa1jau5gaa1kwai1, gwok3jau5gwok3faat3' ('Families have family rules, Countries have national laws, and classrooms have classroom rules'). I am in charge here. Go, get the principal'. Then, the class monitor, the class monitor had no choice but made a move. As soon as he moved, that kid immediately became completely tamed.

The teacher extends the Chinese idiom 'gaa1jau5gaa1kwai1, gwok3jau5gwok3faat3' to the classroom situation. The syntactic structure of co-ordination in the three highlighted sentences further enhances the metaphorical structure involved. Where there are rules and laws in every institution, the school and classroom are no exceptions. The teacher is the person responsible for the law and order in the classroom. The school sets rules for expected behaviour in the classroom and the teacher ensures that they are obeyed. When a student breaks the law, e.g. by talking incessantly during lesson, by swearing at teachers, or by verbally threatening other students, s/he is liable to penalty such as rebuke by the Discipline Master or principal. In general the teacher narrators tend to use legal terms as V-terms when they refer to rule-breaking incidents in the schools, which expresses the metaphor *Teacher is police officer and prosecutor*. Teachers often need to carry out investigative procedures and establish whether or not a student has broken the school rule. For example, a teacher had difficulty in proving that an anti-social student was the one who had put pins on the chair with the intention to take revenge and hurt another student. She narrates the teachers' actions in terms of collecting evidence against the suspect:

Ex. 15

Eh actually the teachers felt 90% sure that it was done by that Form 6 male student. But they did it but he, eh, in fact implied that he did it. He said, 'eh, even if, eh, even if I did it you don't have the *evidence* ('zing3geoi3'). You can't *prove my guilt* ('zi2zing3ngo5'). Well, I felt quite sure that he did it. But it's a pity that we didn't have the *evidence* ('zing3geoi3') to punish him.

Another teacher alludes to an incident in which a student who was on the second floor of the school spat on the overcoat of a female teacher who was passing by underneath. When the parent was contacted, he stood by his son and refused to admit the fault and pay for the cleaning. So the teacher said:

Ex. 16

(W)hether your son spat, actually I don't know. Was that sputum? But we know that someone's back was hit by something. It's now up to you. Either you, either we report it to the police, and take it as a *criminal case* ('jing4si6'), and also someone *allowed an object to fall from height* ('gou1hung1zaak6mat6'). You don't have to take it as sputum. There's another thing. The sputum is still on the back. It's not yet washed, well, we'll take it to be tested, and see whose sputum it is.

Here the teacher presents himself as being involved in the process of prosecution.

Presenting a prima facie case (someone's back hit by something)

Classifying the case (a *criminal case*, 'allowing an object to fall from height' which is a criminal offence in Hong Kong)

Proving the case (forensic testing of the sputum)

An incongruity between the prosecutor's job and the teacher's is quite obvious here as teachers are not expected to decide on a criminal charge, nor are they expected to conduct forensic tests. However, this incongruity is resolved on the basis of some similarity in the purpose, means and seriousness of a prosecutor's job and a teacher's so that the transfer of meaning from the Vehicle domain to the Topic domain produces a new understanding of the teacher's role in education. In the example quoted, the teacher has to conduct a disciplinary investigation like a prosecution so that guilt will be proved beyond reasonable doubt and proper penalty may be imposed upon the student. This is a way of inculcating in students the value of justice and taking responsibility for one's behaviour.

In general, while the teacher narrators themselves recognise the importance of their law-enforcing role in schools, their tone of voice and framing of related events do suggest stress and frustration.

So far we have seen the teacher as a law enforcer and a prosecutor, but the following metaphors reflect an antithetical construction of the teacher as the accused, a criminal, and a special kind of criminal – the triad.

Teacher is the accused

As noted before, some teachers suffer from what they perceive to be false accusations from jealous or hostile colleagues. A teacher narrator uses an accusation/defence expression to describe how her subject panel chairman inundates her with unfair allegations and does not leave her an opportunity to respond.

Ex. 17 He won't even let you offer an explanation.
(*'bin6baak6'* = 'answer a charge and defend one's innocence')

Teacher is criminal

The metaphor suggests the mapping of teachers' sense of guilt onto a sense of duty. In the following example, the teacher comments on how very often he has successfully referred the discipline problems to the Discipline Master without having to deal with them himself. However, it is implied that by evading this responsibility, he is in fact committing a crime. The expression '*zau2ng4lat1*' entails being caught red-handed. When the troubles occur in his lesson and he is the class teacher, he cannot refer the problems to others any more because the responsibility is so obviously his.

Ex. 18 But if they make troubles in my lesson, and I am the class teacher,
(and) if it is related to me, I can't get away with it.
(*'zau2ng4lat1'* = 'cannot run away and get rid of it').

Teacher is triad member

Triad members are notorious for committing organised crimes in Hong Kong. In the stories studied, some teacher narrators associate their misbehaving

students with the triad members in one way or another. As reported by the police, only a minority of problem students have actually been recruited by triad members whose gang activities infiltrate into a very small number of schools. It is generally believed that most trouble makers in the school just imitate the way triad members talk as presented in the media in an attempt to display their worship of and identification with triad 'heroes'. In the process of narration, some teachers adopt this so-called 'triad language', thereby claiming a kind of membership with students and their assumed triad identity. Ex. 19 and Ex. 20 suggest that teachers go about their job in very much the same way as triad members do.

- Ex. 19 That is, that is, the classroom is your *dominion* ('*dei6tau4*'). The [staff room], that is, the teachers' room is my *dominion*. When he comes in, tens of people *besiege* him, either *beating* him or scolding him. Actually it is good. To a certain extent we are helping one another in reproaching students.
('*dei6tau4*' = 'a sphere under the control of a specific triad gang')

The word '*dei6tau4*', which means dominion or sphere of control, is an important concept in triad organisation. There are different triad societies in Hong Kong, and individual societies with their subdivisions and gangs have control of 'specialised' criminal activities such as drug trafficking, extortion, or illegal gambling within specific geographical territories which they claim as their '*dei6tau4*'. To expand their own dominions or usurp others', triad societies resort to violent gang fighting and killing. In these fights and killings, the number of gang members involved and the lethality of the weapons used are often regarded as indications of the gang's power. Ex. 19 shows how the triads' concept of protecting territorial interests is mapped onto the concept of demarcating territories and establishing spheres of control in the school. By virtue of their number, students take control of the classroom when the teacher fails to maintain discipline. The way that students take liberties with breaking school rules in the classroom is compared to the way triad members conduct their illegal activities in their '*dei6tau4*'. However, when a naughty student is sent to the teachers' office after class, he is placed in the teachers' '*dei6tau4*'. He is like a triad member who finds himself in a rival's '*dei6tau4*', outnumbered and powerless. He is subdued by being verbally reproached, or '*besieged*' and '*beaten*', a metaphor of *Teacher is military personnel* enclosed inside the metaphor of *Teacher is triad member*.

- Ex. 20 Sometimes because, that is, they follow a leader. Some students are called '*the horses*', that is. By the way I also have these. I have a couple of '*horses*' ('*maa5*'). As soon as I call them they will be there. They listen to everything the teacher says, that is they listen to everything I say. When they do, I treat them to food, then talk to them, and then they will feel very happy.
('*maa5*' literally 'horse' = 'follower of a triad leader')

In Ex. 20, the teacher constructs himself as the leader of a triad gang by referring to the few students who follow him and obey him as 'a couple of "*horses*" ('*maa5*'). As described in the media and social workers' reports, triad leaders succeed in recruiting youngsters and securing their loyalty by satisfying their material wants and displaying a caring and sympathetic attitude towards their problems.

In a similar way, the teacher builds up students' obedience by treating them to food, talking to them and making them happy.

Religion

Various entities in the vehicle domain of religion are used to construct a negative self – an alienated, victimised and helpless self. This self is created out of negative interpersonal and intra-institutional relationships.

Teacher is god

One of the teacher narrators said that her colleagues treated her 'like a god' but it was not spoken with humour or self-complacency. She just wanted to stress the loneliness and sense of alienation when other teachers kept her at a distance because she had gained the principal's favour.

Like 'Teacher is object', 'Teacher is target for archery' and 'Teacher is the Accused', this metaphor highlights the problem of jealousy and competition among colleagues. While this may be a common problem in many professions, societal expectation of teachers' high moral integrity makes this even more stressful for teachers who are inhibited from discussing it openly, for they are obliged to protect the professional image.

Teacher is sacrificial offering

To avoid becoming the centre of attack, a teacher asked her principal not to give her a new title, and another thought what her principal had asked her to do might rouse the jealousy or suspicion of other teachers. Both said to their principals, 'Don't *'baai2ngosoeng5toi'*. The expression literally means '*lifting and placing me on the altar as a sacrificial offering*'. The teachers who use the expression perceive themselves as the sacrifices which their principals offer in order to achieve their objectives and implement their policies smoothly, just like the sacrifices which worshippers make to their gods in order to get what they pray for.

Teacher is Taoist priest

Taoist priests can draw magic figures or incantations which are believed to have the power to invoke or expel evil spirits and bring good or ill fortune. In the school context, the problems caused by badly behaved students and irresponsible colleagues are just like evil spirits which need to be expelled with effective incantations. When a teacher does not have any solutions to these problems, s/he sees him/herself as totally powerless, just like a Taoist priest without any incantations. Teachers find themselves particularly helpless when parents do not co-operate.

Ex. 21

T9: It is useless to meet the parents.

T8: Some of them don't even come even when you ask them to come. Then *what can you do* ('*jau5mat1je5fu4'*)? Right? The parents say you punish them however you like.

(*jau5mat1je5fu4* = '*what magic incantations have you got?*')

Business

In this category, education is established as a business, and its values are constructed in monetary terms. This is similar to the metaphorical conception of

education in the Root Analogy *Value is money/Wealth* discussed in Goatly (2002). The teacher is expected to help increase the value of school and to help the school to gain profit. The criterion by which this profit is measured is the academic results of the students in public examinations.

Ex. 22 The first thing was that the results of our school in recent years were *depreciating* (*bin2zik6*) year by year.

This puts pressure on the teachers to raise students' standard. If academically students do not perform well, the school will lose its value, as warned by an official from the Education Department.

Ex. 23 If not, we will announce that your school is a *depreciating school* (*'bin2zik6ge3hok6haau6'*).

This ideology positions the teacher as a businessperson. In fact, some teacher narrators see themselves as running a business. They call their colleagues '*business partners*' and their principals '*boss*'. One of the businesses which a senior teacher does is to urge other colleagues who are slothful and uncooperative to hand in their work. After doing this for a while, she sees herself as a debt collector.

Ex. 24 Well, I was best at *chasing people for completion of their long delayed work*. (*'zeoi1sau1laan6zoeng3'* = '*specialised in chasing and demanding payment of debts which are long overdue and difficult to recall*')

As money is measured in quantifiable units, so is education. This meets with resistance from some teachers who do not conceive the value of education as a measurable or quantifiable entity, as the following extract shows.

Ex. 25

There was a school visit. I talked to the [inspector] for a long time. They emphasised a lot of things which were [measurable]. At that time I told him, I said, 'My opinion is that a lot of things are in fact not [measurable], because they are not so [concrete] as to be measurable' and I said, 'Those things could be even more important, for example, the students' sense of belonging to the school, their relationship with the teachers. A lot of what teachers say has long-term but not [immediate] effects on them. Those things cannot be [measure]d.' Well, the [inspector] fully agreed with me, but he said they had no choice. 'We need to look at the [measurable] things', he said. Then I said, 'Does that mean your [evaluation] of us has to be [measurable]?' . . .

But there are things which are not [measurable]. What is most [measurable]? Academic results, of course. So this is the only thing we look at, that is, [percentage], [pass percentage], [and then] they [measure] it. They only *make up the figures* (*'duk1sou3'*). For example, they [measure] how many times I have taken the students for tings . . . So I have no other alternatives but *make up the figures* (*'duk1sou3'*) . . . it is so easy to *make up the figures* (*'duk1sou3'*).

The main principle is that you need to organise a lot of things. So you organise a lot of things. But you do this and you do that. *It's like lighting up*

28 stoves. How can you manage all of them? There's a deadline for everything. Then how can you meet all those [deadline]s? In one word, I find that each time I leave my desk and come back, there are several more things, with different [deadline]s.

The expression '*duk1sou3*' has the meaning of fabricating figures so as to mislead or cheat. The teacher narrator rejects figures as a way to quantify and evaluate education because this is not a true reflection of the quality or value of her work. Interestingly she uses a combined metaphor of quantification and cooking '*It's like lighting up 28 stoves*' to refute the institutional belief that 'more is better'. It would be impossible to imagine that anyone who lights up 28 stoves and cooks food on them at the same time can manage the cooking, not to mention the quality of the cooking.

As in business, teachers are expected to produce or sell, but some of them are not happy with what they are required to produce or sell, as put in a teacher's own words:

Ex. 26 I am not interested in doing those heaps of things, but I still need to do them because I am required to *submit the work*. ('*gaau1fo3*' = 'deliver goods').

The teacher sees some of the less valuable jobs required of her such as writing plans and reports as goods only, something that she does not take a personal interest in but is forced to produce.

Another commodity which the teacher sells is her life because she has to meet so many demands at work that they drain away her energy and leaves her very little time for herself. She has repeated the expression 'I am *giving up my life for it*' ('*maai6meng6*' = 'selling life') four times in one narrative. Selling life is a case of enclosing the metaphor of *Selling is dying* within the metaphor of *Working is selling*.

There is an underlying principle which provides coherence for these paradoxical metaphors in the domains of physical force/fighting, government & law, religion and business. It is the highlighting of negative aspects of the entities, activities and events in these domains and the construction of a negative self due to stress at work. This focus is probably an effect of the context of discourse. The design of the interview questions pre-sets a frame for narrating troublesome experiences. Besides, the friendly or intimate relationship between the researcher and the subjects and their shared backgrounds may offer a greater sense of security and solidarity than in other research situations. There is a stronger motivation to gain sympathy and thus a free outpour of negative feelings is triggered. These contextual factors play an important part in the subjects' use of metaphors not just in the construction of a negative self, but also in that of a positive self, as discussed in the next section.

Construction of a positive self

Reference terms provide a valuable insight into how teachers construct the self because an important function of reference terms is to place their users in a particular role, a particular identity in relation to the referents. The use of reference terms is therefore considered metaphorical since they involve a mapping

of our knowledge about certain roles in the vehicle domain onto that in the topic domain. The 'grounds' (Goatly, 1997) of this mapping are interpreted within the Chinese politeness system. Scollon and Scollon (1995: 42–3) classify politeness systems into deference politeness system, solidarity politeness system and hierarchical politeness system on the basis of Power (+P, –P) and Distance (+D, –D). Power refers to the 'vertical disparity' in the participants' relationship in a hierarchical structure and Distance signifies the closeness of participants' relationship. In applying this model of classification to her analysis of Chinese lessons in Hong Kong, Ho (2002: 302–17) finds that the teacher-student relationship is an instance of hierarchical politeness system involving many +P, –D situations, and one of the best exemplifications is the use of address terms and reference terms.

In this research, teachers use both 'student' and other terms to refer to their students. The Chinese equivalent of 'student' is 'hok6saang1', which when used, focuses on the role of the institutional dyad – teacher and student. There are 185 tokens of 'hok6saang1' compared with 98 tokens of other reference terms. This suggests that reference terms are an important linguistic resource which teachers employ to construct their identity other than that of a teacher.

Throughout the interviews, the term which teachers used most frequently to refer to their students regardless of gender was 'sai3lou6' or its variants.

sai3lou6 = small child (34 tokens)

sai3lou6zai2 = small child + diminutive (4 tokens)

sai3lou6go1 = small child + diminutive (2 tokens)

sai3man1zai2 = lit. 'small mosquito', meaning small child + diminutive (1 token)

These terms reflect the teacher's conception of him/herself as the 'big adult' and enactment of the social roles expected of 'big adults' in the culture. As noted in studies of Chinese culture (Chang & Holt, 1994; Ho, 2000, 2002; King & Bond, 1985), human relationships are seen in terms of dyads. There are five 'cardinal' or basic relationships: those between king and subject, father and son, elder and younger brother, husband and wife, and friend and friend. The first of each dyad is given more power and is entitled to deference and obedience of the second. This asymmetricality is a characteristic of the hierarchical politeness system where there is great disparity in power between members (+P). At the same time, each member of the dyad in the Chinese relational hierarchy has specific roles and obligations. Where the higher-ranking members enjoy power and respect, they have to bear the responsibility of looking after the well-being of those beneath them. The social distance between members is shortened when benevolent care is exercised (–D). This way of conceiving the five basic relationships is extended to other relationships. Therefore, a teacher is treated as the more powerful of the teacher–student dyad by virtue of his/her intellectual or moral superiority, and an adult is at the upper end of the hierarchy by virtue of his/her age and life experience. When teachers refer to their students as 'sai3lou6' which is spoken as a low variety, they stress their social position as more powerful adults but also their fondness of their students as children. The diminutive suffixes 'zai2' and 'go1' further express their doting attitude and strengthen the –D aspect of their relationship.

Some teachers use more linguistic resources to express themselves as condescending but at the same time affectionate adults. They objectify students by referring to them as an object '*thing*' and by using classifiers. A teacher refers to a student as '*this thing*' ('*nei1go3je5*' = '*this*+ classifier *go3* +*thing*'), and another uses '*saam1go3je5*' (= '*three* +classifier *go3* + *thing*') in talking about three naughty students. This is congruous with a Chinese naming / referencing practice which may appear peculiar to Westerners. Indirect expression of affection is preferred, and dehumanising terms are often used as terms of endearment. For instance, a baby may be called a 'pig', suggesting a traditional belief that pigs symbolise wealth and good health because they are well fed and fat.

Another dehumanising classifier used by teachers is '*zek3*'. Ho (1997: 71, 76) notes that whereas '*go3*' is the most neutral classifier used to refer to a human person, regardless of the person's sex, age, occupation or any other attributes, '*zek3*' is normally used for animals, birds and insects. When '*zek3*' is used to describe a human person, it indicates the speaker's sympathetic attitude or his / her intimate relationship to the referent. In fact, the following linguistic form as employed by the teachers is turned into a term of endearment:

numeral / deixis + classifier + reference term

gei2zek3sai3lou6 = several + classifier *zek3* + small child

go2zek3sai3lou6 = that + classifier *zek3* + small child

Some teachers have extended this linguistic form to:

deixis + classifier + epithet + reference term

go2zek3jai5zai2 = that + classifier *zek3* + naughty + son

nei1zek3jai5zai2 = this + classifier *zek3* + naughty + son

nei1go3seoi1zai2 = this + classifier *go3* + bad + son

There are three points worthy of note. First, the reference is definite; a specific individual or several specific individuals are referred to. Second, the epithets '*jai5*' ('naughty') and '*seoi1*' ('bad') entail negative judgments, the latter being more negative. Third, the reference term is a kinship term 'son', referring to the student's family role and gender. These three elements, when combined to form a reference term, suggest a very close relationship between the speaker and the referent (-D) and acts as a (sometimes gentle) rebuke. It is used by the senior members of the family (grandparents, parents, uncles and aunts and so on) to address or refer to their junior counterparts who are in trouble or bring disgrace to the family. For example, a father may call his son '*nei5go3 seoi1zai2*' when he is exasperated by his wrongdoings. When teachers use this linguistic form to refer to their 'naughty' or 'bad' students, it expresses strong emotions of concern, anger and frustration which resemble those of parents dealing with ill-behaving children.

On the basis of the above discussions, I would propose that the self of the teacher is conceptualised in the metaphor 'Teacher is parent', which is a specification of the metaphor 'Teacher is adult' understood in the specific cultural context. By using reference terms like '*sai3lou6*', the classifier '*zek3*' and an inanimate object '*je3*' ('*thing*'), the teacher constructs him / herself as an adult who has an intimate relationship and social responsibilities to a group of young children

under his/her care. This manifests an extension of the +P but –D pattern in Chinese parent–child interactions. The use of a negative epithet and the kinship term ‘zai2’ (‘son’) as in ‘nei1zek3jai5zai2’ further implies that the teacher may see him/herself as parent to his/her student and share the parent’s perspective and feelings. The teachers’ love for the children is perhaps best expressed in a teacher’s evaluation of her students: The whole school ‘sek3’ (‘loves’) them, that is, they are really ‘gwaai1’ (‘good’). The word ‘sek3’ usually refers to superior kinsfolk (parents, uncles, aunts, elder brothers and sisters, etc.) loving subordinate kinsfolk (children, nephews, nieces, younger brothers and sisters, etc.), and the word ‘gwaai1’ is used to commend children’s good behaviour. This is an expression of *School is family*, and the observation is cognate with the prevalent use of the *Family* metaphor in Chinese political and business discourses (Liu, 2002).

The construction of a positive, caring and loving self is partly an effect of the discourse context. It may be recalled that the researcher and the subjects share common cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Both belong to the same discourse community of Cantonese/English bilingual teachers in Hong Kong, and in most cases, they maintain a close personal relationship with each other. This entails assumption of understanding and accurate interpretation of the discourse conventions used. Hence the Cantonese reference terms were used in their most specific cultural sense. They were an indication of ‘communication accommodation’ which occurs when the speakers modify their language to reduce the differences between them so as to cater for the needs, expectations and communication goals of the interlocutors (Coupland *et al.*, 1991). It seems that in the interviews, the teacher narrators accommodate the perceived need for a joint negotiation of the professional self. They seem to be claiming that despite all the problems and stress embodied in the negative self, they still survive as professional teachers who educate and care for their students, against all odds. The overriding concern is to treat their students like children (generic) and *their* children (specific). The ‘painful self-disclosure’ in constructing the negative self on the one hand and the tone of intimacy in constructing the positive self on the other may suggest a ‘hidden agenda’ of ‘heroicism’ which is aimed at ‘creatively setting positive competences and qualities against a backdrop of problems and disadvantage’ (Coupland *et al.*, 1991: 129).

Conclusion

A distinctive feature of the metaphorical construction of the teacher’s self in this study is paradoxes. The self is constructed as being in negative and positive relationships to significant others through paradoxical metaphors. The underlying principle for the coherence of the paradoxes is the highlighting of the negative aspects of the vehicle domains to explain the ‘grounds’ for understanding the topic in terms of the vehicles. The teacher is both an applier of force and an object to which force is applied. S/he enforces law and prosecutes but s/he is also the accused and a criminal. In the domain of religion, s/he is an alienated god, an offering to be sacrificed and a Taoist priest who is unable to exercise his priestly power. Besides, within the institutionalised ideology of education as business, a teacher is compelled to do his/her job like a businessperson. His/her job is understood and assessed in terms of quantifiable terms, like a commodity. Finally his/her life may become a commodity itself. The metaphorical sense of the reference

terms in constructing a positive self is also paradoxical in nature. It conceptualises the teacher as a reproachful but caring and even affectionate adult and parent.

It is possible that the paradoxical nature of the metaphors used is a reflection of subjective reality as conceptualised by the teacher narrators. They are portraying the paradoxes of their professional life as experienced. Tension, sense of helplessness and alienation, and commitment as well as dedication are all parts of the teacher's self. On the other hand, these metaphors are triggered by the context of discourse in which shared socio-cultural backgrounds and community speech norms make possible a coherent interpretation of the incongruities involved.

Narratives of personal experience enact inner realities and reveal real-life problems (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). This study has explored the individual experiences of a specific teacher group and provided a new perspective to issues of a more general nature. Experienced through metaphorical projections, these teachers' negative self is created out of their encounters with students' discipline problems, poor inter-personal relationships in the school, inadequate managerial skills of the principal and heavy demands of the education authorities. On the other hand, the reference terms used by teachers help to construct a more positive self. Permeating all the narratives, these +P/-D reference terms explain, at least in part, the success with which these experienced teachers carry on with a job and a life perceived so grimly through many of the metaphors they employ. It is commitment, care and a great sense of responsibility which resemble those of parents that have helped to motivate and sustain teachers when they face challenges. It is hoped that the findings of this case study provide a basis for discussion in teacher development programmes. Teachers may share their experience in coping with paradoxical roles and exchange views on how a negative self image may aggravate work-related stress. More importantly, teachers should be encouraged to construct a positive self in culturally appropriate terms and live by that self.

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