

Gestures of Korean Emotion Metaphors: A Case Study for Anger, Happiness and Sadness

by Ebru Türker

University of Pittsburgh

Earlier studies have already argued that metaphors are not just a phenomenon of verbal language (c.f. Cienki 2005, 2008; Cienki & Müller, 2008; Gibbs, 2008; Müller & Cienki, 2009); rather the interaction between metaphoric language and gesture plays an important role in providing plausible evidence for cognitive semantics, namely, the embodied nature of meaning and the grounding of abstract conceptions in perceptual and motor experience (Langacker, 2008). Accordingly, Lakoff (2008) notes that metaphorical gestures provide evidence – independent of words – for the theory of conceptual metaphors. This study examines the metaphoric gestures for three emotion concepts, namely ANGER, HAPPINESS and SADNESS in Korean. I examined the metaphorical expressions of these emotions in Korean based on a detailed corpus-based analysis. This earlier research presented central and submetaphors of emotion concepts and provided a detailed analysis of source vs. target domains of each emotion metaphor. I claimed that, although Korean emotion metaphors manifest significant similarity to English in the source vs. target domains via universal metaphors, their specificity in relation to each other can nevertheless be assessed with the help of a quantitative distributional analysis of the frequencies as well as productivity occurrence of metaphorical expressions associated with each of the concepts under study. The results of the earlier study indicated that to a considerable extent Korean emotion metaphors support the universality of conceptual metaphor theory; however, such emotion domains also have individual features with their own characteristics governed by the Korean cultural model. Building on the earlier research analysis, the aim of the present study is to provide further non-linguistic evidence for the emotion metaphors by investigating Korean gestures. I specifically concentrate on the kinds of relations that appear in speech and/or gesture in case of emotion metaphors. In particular, I identify Korean gestures which have developed fixed meanings in the culture for expressing emotions, rather than the ones produced spontaneously and are highly dependent on context. The research questions are i) what type of gestures does Korean employ in expressing ANGER, HAPPINESS and SADNESS; ii) to what extent these gestures coincide with emotion-related conceptual metaphors which I have identified with the corpus analysis of emotion metaphors; iii) to what extent do Korean co-verbal gestures represent or indicate the source domain of emotion metaphors. The data is collected from Korean native speakers through an interview for gesture identification, and will be coded in terms of the different types of features that can describe a gesture for each emotion metaphor. Each gesture is examined from the moment articulators begin to depart from a position of rest or completion until the moment when they return to rest, thus accounting for what Kendon (2004) calls a “gesture unit.” Identified gestures are coded in terms of the different types of features that can describe a gesture for each emotion metaphor. The results indicate that Korean gestures can be a source of conceptual emotion metaphors which are motivated by the universal embodied experiences and cultural understandings, and may or may not appear in verbal expression in speech.

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