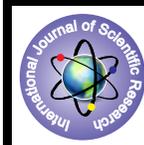


## Cognitive Science Perspective: Synectics As a Model of Learning Metaphors



### Education

**KEYWORDS** : Synectics, metaphors, compressed conflicts

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### ABSTRACT

*Teaching, a dynamic process is a fluid interplay of various factors – of how thoughts, ideas and emotions interact with the environment and get transformed in the minds of the learners. Excellent teaching relies on several tools of inquiry that shape and reshape our learning environment. An attempt is made here to elaborate one such tool of inquiry 'Synectics' as a Model of teaching. Even though it is called a model of teaching, it is in fact to be called a model of learning as the aim of teaching is to create generative or self-directed learners; this metacognitive strategy endows ownership of learning to the learners.*

### Sample of the study

Twenty nine student-teachers (pursuing B.Ed degree programme) with Advanced English as their first option and General English as their second option studying in the Department of Education of Avinashilingam University for Women, Coimbatore constituted the sample of the study.

### Methodology

There were totally 29 student-teachers in the class and of which 3 were visually impaired. They were divided into six groups and in each group, there were 5 members. Six nursery rhymes were selected. None of the students knew any of the rhymes that were selected. It is important to mention here that all 29 students had English Language & Literature as their major at graduate level but all of them were from vernacular medium schools. In rural panchayat union schools where they had their primary education, they never recited or sang any of the English nursery rhymes. Only nursery rhyme that they were familiar with was 'Johny, Johny, Yes papa' and that too due to a popular advertisement that used that rhyme.

The focus of the workshop was to enhance the metaphoric activity of the student teachers. Initially the investigator taught them to establish metaphors through simple nursery rhymes such as 'Jack and Jill went up the hill' and 'Humpty Dumpty'. Only two nursery rhymes were chosen by the investigator to explain and to establish a relationship of likeness, comparison of one idea with another object and to develop vicarious thinking (to create empathy).

Metaphoric activity depends on and draws from the student's knowledge, helping them connect ideas from familiar content to those from new content, or view familiar content from a new perspective. Synectic strategies, according to Gordon, provide a structure through which learners develop new insight into everyday activities. As prescribed by Gordon, three types of analogies are used in this study.

- Personal Analogy
- Direct Analogy
- Compressed Conflict

### Personal Analogy

In order to make personal analogies, students have to empathise with the characters involved and must feel they have become part of the physical elements of the problem. The identification may be with a person, plant, animal or nonliving thing.

### Direct Analogy

Direct analogy is the comparison of two objects or concepts. The comparison need not have to be identical in all respects. The main function of direct analogy is to transpose the conditions from the given topic or problem situation to another situation in order to add a new dimension or perspective to the given problem.

### Compressed Conflict

This metaphorical form, is usually a two-word phrase in which the words contradict each other. Gordon quotes 'friendly foe' and 'tiredly aggressive' as examples of compressed conflict.

Based on the two nursery rhymes 'Jack and Jill' and 'Humpty Dumpty', the investigator played the 3D animated versions of the rhymes to create metaphorical sets using visual imagery. This was played 3 times to motivate the student teachers. After this, the investigator elaborated on the 3 types of analogies pertinent to each of the nursery rhyme.

### Jack and Jill – nursery rhyme

Personal analogies given by the investigator was:

- Climbing up the stairs to go to 5<sup>th</sup> floor of an apartment building to invite a family friend for a wedding as the lift was under repair
- Going up the sky in the hot air balloon to have a bird's eye-view of Funnel Mountains, Assam.

### Direct analogies given by the investigator was:

- Jack and Jill climbing up the hill to fetch a pail of water? Why? Who asked them to do that?
- What made them go up the hill? – a sweet-water fountain or spring up the hill? Or acute water shortage in the valley?
- Two small children who lost their mother? Or abused by step mother?

### Compressed Conflicts

- A serious game?
- Lucid tragedy?

### Humpty Dumpty – nursery rhyme

Personal analogies given by the investigator was:

- Because of mild tremor, the building collapsed and the man working on the parapet wall fell off on the ground.
- The two cars collided and she was thrown off the vehicle.

### Direct analogies given by the investigator was:

- What would you do in the situations given in the personal analogies or in Humpty Dumpty's case?
- Rush the victim to the hospital? Or call emergency, fire & hospital? Give First Aid? Compressed Conflicts
- Casual Accident
- Funny sorrow

This activity lasted till lunch break. Once they got back after lunch, the student-teachers watched 3D Animated Nursery Rhymes –six of them together and this was played thrice. The lyrics or the entire poem or the entire nursery rhymes in words (in printed format) was given to each participant.

The rhymes chosen for the workshop were:

- Cobbler, cobbler
- Incy Wincy spider
- Hickory Dickory

- Twinke, twinkle Little star
- Mary had a little lamb
- Five little speckled frogs

These simple rhymes are easy to learn with simple words and these include an interesting array of human beings, animals, insects, inanimate things as chief characters.

Many metaphors in English form part of the ordinary repertoire of the native speaker. It is absolutely essential for English teachers not only to identify and understand the metaphors used in the language but also to apply and use metaphoric language in everyday conversation and this can be encouraged in a creative manner through nursery rhymes. The first activity was to make personal analogies and the second activity was to create direct analogy and the third activity being compressed conflict. Initially, they found these activities a little difficult as it took them a while to remove the mental blocks and once they made the connections, the activities spurred creativity and develop different perspectives. The teamwork enabled them to shed their inhibitions and open up more among their peers. The synectics model provided clear-cut guidance and instruction to the student teachers. The third activity was really a challenge to many but later on they composed very interesting 'compressed conflicts'.

**Table 1. List of 'Compressed conflicts'**

Nursery Rhyme	Compressed Conflicts
1. Cobbler, Cobbler, mend my shoe	1. Footwear doctor
	2. Shoe surgeon
	3. Gait mender
	4. Walk maker
	5. Gait Consultant
2. Incy Wincy Spider	1. Spout Trotter
	2. Spoutathon Runner
	3. Rainwater slider
	4. Spout dweller
	5. Basking spider
3. Hickory, Dickory Dock	1. Clock mouse
	2. Mouse house
	3. Mouse Pad
	4. Ticky Micky
	5. Tick, Dock
	6. Dock Home
	7. Ticking home
	8. Fleeting Mouse

4. Twinkle, twinkle little star!	1. Stellar diamond
	2. Sky gem
	3. Unwearable diamond
	4. Gem thief
	5. Diamond hoarder
5. Mary had a little lamb	1. Lamb pupil
	2. Learned lamb
	3. Lamb scholar
	4. Schooled lamb
6. Five Little Speckled Frogs	1. Fun-loving frogs
	2. Frog picnic
	3. Cool frogs
	4. Frog fraternity
	5. Frog freaks

Table 1 here gives the list of compressed conflicts constructed by the student teachers.

These metaphors were used by them subsequently to compose their own poems and this further added depth and intensity to the metaphoric activity.

**Conclusions**

The synectics model provided opportunities for student-teachers to think creatively and develop meta-cognition that permitted to form deeper connection with the concepts learnt. The student-teachers felt that this model enabled them to establish connection with words they have learnt and this activity transformed abstract concepts into concrete. Through simple nursery rhymes, it was possible for them to form new metaphors. The nursery rhymes made this activity enjoyable and enriching.

**Declaration**

I hereby declare that the paper entitled 'COGNITIVE SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE: SYNECTICS AS A MODEL OF LEARNING METAPHORS submitted to The Editor, International Journal of Scientific Research is the original work by me and it has not been published or submitted for publication elsewhere or presented in any seminar or workshop.

**REFERENCE**

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