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UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

English
CELS

Littlemore, J. (2003) The effect of
cultural background on metaphor
interpretation. *Metaphor and symbol*,
18(4), p.273-288.

Post-print
2003

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The Effect of Cultural Background on Metaphor Interpretation

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Abstract

This article describes a study that investigated the ways in which Bangladeshi students interpreted metaphors used by their lecturers during a short course at a British university. The students were asked to interpret a number of metaphors presented in context. They were also asked to identify the value judgements that were being expressed through these metaphors in these particular contexts. Culture-specific assumptions about the target domains appeared to affect the students' recognition of the lecturers' attitudes to the issues they were discussing. In order to identify areas of disparity between the (working) cultures of the Bangladeshi students and their British lecturers, Hofstede's (1980) cultural values questionnaire was administered. The students were found to be more likely than their lecturers to favour uncertainty avoidance, and to favour high power distance at work. The kinds of (mis)interpretations that the students made of (the evaluative content of) the metaphors appeared in accordance with these cultural differences. Implications of these findings are discussed.

The Effect of Cultural Background on Metaphor Interpretation

Metaphors have been shown to be a stumbling block for overseas students when trying to follow lectures at university. An inability to understand the metaphors used by lecturers can lead students to misinterpret not only the information conveyed in the lecture, but also the attitude of the lecturer towards the information that he or she is presenting (Littlemore, 2001).

One reason why students tend to misinterpret metaphors may be that they use different cultural references when attempting to interpret them. It has been argued elsewhere in this issue (Deignan, Charteris-Black) that metaphors are typically culturally-loaded expressions, whose meaning has to be inferred through reference to shared cultural knowledge. Naturally, there is variability in the extent to which people from different cultural backgrounds share cultural knowledge (D'Andrade, 1987), and people's ability to understand metaphors is likely to reflect this variability. Confusion is particularly likely to arise when, for cultural reasons, the speaker and listener attach different connotations to the source domains (e.g., Trompenaars, 1993). A student's cultural background is also likely to affect the ways in which he or she is able to use clues in the surrounding context to help interpret metaphors. Students are perhaps more likely to notice clues that correspond to their cultural expectations than ones that do not.

In this article, I describe a small, exploratory study that investigated the ability of non-native speaker students to use the surrounding context to interpret a number of metaphors that were used by their lecturers, and to work out the lecturers' attitude towards the subjects being discussed. It attempted to relate students' interpretations of

lecturers' metaphors to an established framework of variation in cross-cultural values

(Hofstede, 1980). As this framework deals with values within in the workplace, it was

felt to be particularly appropriate for this study, as all of the students, and many of the

lecturers were employed as civil servants in their respective countries. Furthermore, the

content of the lectures was largely related to the field of work and management.

<div align="center">Method</div>

Participants

The participants in the study (henceforth referred to as "the students") were eighteen

Bangladeshi Civil Servants attending a six-week course in public service administration

at the University of Birmingham, and seven of the lecturers who taught on the course.

The students' level of English was high (IELTS 6 or above), however, their scores on the

listening component of IELTS were significantly lower than their scores on the other

parts of the test. The students were all seconded from the Bangladeshi Civil Service.

The aims of the course were to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the British

Civil Service, with a view to promoting change and modernization within the

Bangladeshi Civil Service. The lectures were given by both staff from the International

Development Department and by practising civil servants. It was predicted that the

lecturers would have certain sets of values which might, at times, conflict with those held

by the students. It was hypothesised that these conflicting values may lead the students to

miss clues in the context, and to misinterpret the lecturers' metaphors, and the opinions

that they were being used to convey.

In order to identify potential differences in the students' and lecturers' value

systems, Hofstede's (1980) four-dimensional values framework was applied. The four

dimensions of variability in this framework are uncertainty avoidance, power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and ego versus social orientation. Although other dimensions have since been added to this list, these remain four of the most important ways in which cultures are thought to differ from one another. Hofstede included Great Britain in his analysis, but not Bangladesh. However, by using relevant information concerning the structure of Bengali society and the Bangladesh Civil Service, it was possible to draw hypotheses about possible areas of conflict between the two cultures.

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the extent to which organisations and cultures (and the people within them) seek to protect themselves from the risks and uncertainties of life. As with all of Hofstede's value dimensions, it is thought to operate as a continuum. The descriptions that follow are of cultures that sit at either end of the continuum, and may thus appear somewhat extreme. People from weak uncertainty avoidance organisations and cultures tend to take uncertainty to be a normal feature of life, accepting each day as it comes; try to minimise general rules; do not like standardisation; tolerate differences in behaviours and styles; and do not like precise specifications. People from strong uncertainty avoidance organisations and cultures tend to see uncertainty as a threat which should be fought; consider standardisation desirable; do not have much tolerance for very great differences in behaviours and styles; and are happy with precise specifications. According to Hofstede (1980: 122), Britain ranks quite low down on the uncertainty avoidance index, implying that British people, in general, are relatively comfortable with uncertainty. The fact that the Bengali Civil Service has a rigid structure combined with the fact that members of Bengali society traditionally have

clear cut social roles (White, 1992) suggested that the Bangladeshi students would be more likely to avoid uncertainty than their British lecturers.

Power distance refers to how equal people are, or would like to be. In organisations and cultures where the power distance is low, inequalities are minimised; everybody is involved in decision making; subordinates are consulted rather than just ordered; the boss is seen as a resourceful democrat; and the same rules apply to everyone. In organisations and cultures where the power distance is high, inequalities among people are expected and accepted; some people make decisions, and others obey; subordinates expect to be told what to do; the boss is seen as a father figure; and certain rules apply only to bosses, whereas others only to subordinates. According to Hofstede (1980: 79), Britain is a comparatively low power-distance society. The rigid hierarchical nature of Bengali society, and of its Civil Service (Kramsjo & Wood, 1992; McGregor, 1991) suggested that the Bangladeshi students would be more inclined towards a high power distance than their British lecturers.

The individualist/collectivist dimension refers to the extent to which people see themselves primarily as individuals, or as members of bigger groups. In individualist organisations and cultures, people look after themselves; they want to be appreciated as individuals, and for the work that they themselves have done; they are motivated by a feeling of personal accomplishment; the employer-employee relationship is a contract based on mutual advantage; and people are expected to speak their minds. In collectivist organisations and cultures, people need to be associated with a group and the work that the group does; the employer-employee relationship is perceived in moral terms; harmony is valued; and direct confrontation avoided. According to Hofstede (1980: 167),

British society is fairly individualistic. Bengali society (including the Civil Service) has traditionally relied on a system of networks and personal contacts (Lewis, Wood & Gregory, 1996), implying a more collectivist system. On the other hand, more recent research has shown that there is an increasing trend towards individualism amongst the middle classes of Bangladeshi society (see Wood, 1999). As the students were all members of the middle classes or above, it was difficult to draw hypotheses for this dimension.

The ego/social dimension refers to the extent to which an organisation promotes hard "ego-oriented" values or soft "society-oriented" values. Members of society-oriented organisations and cultures tend to value modesty and caring for others; they stress quality of life; they have a tendency to "undersell" themselves by maintaining a low profile; they consider people and warm relationships to be of primary importance; and they try to resolve conflicts through compromise and negotiation. Members of ego-oriented organisations and cultures value assertiveness and competition; they stress achievement and decisiveness; they have a tendency to "oversell" themselves by maintaining a high profile; they consider money and things to be very important; and they resolve conflicts by fighting them out. According to Hofstede (1980: 189), Britain tends to be a relatively ego-oriented culture. In Bengali society, family concerns traditionally take priority over professional and public concerns (Bertocci, 1972; Wood, 1988). This suggested that the Bangladeshi students might have a more society-oriented outlook than their British lecturers.

Each of the participants was asked to complete a version of Hofstede's (1980) "values survey" questionnaire, which can be found in Appendix 1. This questionnaire is recommended by Hofstede for purposes of cross-cultural comparison.

A Mann-Whitney Test *U* was used to compare the students' responses to those of the lecturers. Two significant differences were found. Firstly, the students were found to be significantly more likely to favour uncertainty avoidance than the lecturers (students' mean rank: 20.1; lecturers' mean rank: 9.75, $p < 0.01$). Secondly, the students were significantly more likely than the lecturers to favour high power distance (students' mean rank: 13.6; lecturers' mean rank: 6.4, $p < 0.05$). As for the remaining two dimensions, the lecturers seemed to have a slightly more collectivist outlook than the students (students' mean rank: 11.4; lecturers' mean rank: 14), and the students exhibited a slightly more "society-oriented" outlook than the lecturers (students' mean rank: 12.7; lecturers' mean rank: 9.5). However, neither of these differences was statistically significant.

Metaphor interpretation task

In the metaphor interpretation task (which can be found in Appendix 2), the participants were shown seven metaphors in context. They were then asked to explain the meaning of each metaphor, to state what opinion the lecturer held on the subject, and to give their own opinion on the subject.

The metaphors selected for this task had all been used in spontaneous speech by the lecturers at some point on the course. In order to collect them, I attended and made audio recordings of fifteen hours of lectures. At this point, the lecturers were unaware of the nature of the experiment. I noted instances of metaphor use, particularly when they appeared to be culturally loaded, and conveyed an opinion. Seven metaphors were then

chosen for the metaphor analysis task; all of which were thought to express one of

Hofstede's value dimensions. The metaphors used in the task, and the value dimensions

that they were thought to represent, are presented in Table 1. The relationships between

the metaphors and the value dimensions are discussed below.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

The metaphorical expressions "*freeing up external trade*" (extract 2) and "*it doesn't

matter if the cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice*" (extract 7) were chosen for

study as they were thought to reflect an underlying belief that uncertainty is a good thing.

As the students had been shown by the Hofstede questionnaire to be significantly more

likely to favour uncertainty avoidance than their lecturers, it was hypothesised that they

might miss the full evaluative content of the messages being conveyed through these

metaphors.

The metaphorical expressions "*top-down, bottom-up forms of assessment*" and

"*trickle down economics*" were chosen as they were thought to imply a system of

hierarchy. The fact that both of these notions were being criticized by the lecturers (see

extracts 4 and 6 in Appendix 2) was thought to have been, in part, a reflection of the fact

that steep hierarchies tend to be viewed negatively in Britain. As the students had been

shown by the Hofstede questionnaire to be significantly more likely to tolerate hierarchy

than their lecturers, it was again hypothesised that they might miss the full evaluative

content of the messages being conveyed.

The metaphorical expression "*to slowly shift the creaking apparatus of public

administration*" (see extract 5) was thought, in this context, to reflect a collectivist

outlook on the part of the lecturer. The lecturer appears to view the Civil Service as a single entity.

The metaphorical expressions "*cut back the machinery of Government*" (extract 1) and "*we'll let the British economy live or die by the forces of international competition*" (extract 3) were both chosen as they were thought to reflect a somewhat hard, ego-oriented view of society and of the Civil Service.

The students were given the metaphor analysis task in class at the beginning of the third week of the course. This meant that they had heard all seven metaphors, used in context by their lecturers, at some point during the previous two weeks. They each worked individually, and the task took between forty-five minutes and one hour.

Discussions were held with the lecturers participating in the experiment in order to verify the opinions expressed in the extracts. The students' interpretations were then checked by myself and by a lecturer from the International Development Department. Interpretations were only considered to be "wrong" if both judges felt this to be the case.

Results and Discussion

The students' metaphor interpretations appeared to reflect value differences to varying extents. Metaphors that tended to be misinterpreted by the students were the ones that were thought to reflect uncertainty avoidance and power-distance. The metaphors that were thought to reflect the individualist/collectivist and the ego-oriented/society-oriented dimensions did not appear to cause comprehension problems. The extent to which each of the metaphors was misinterpreted is shown in Table 2.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

As we saw above, the metaphors thought to be associated with uncertainty avoidance were "*freeing up external trade*" and "*it doesn't matter if the cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice*". Interestingly, both of these metaphors appeared to be misinterpreted by at least some of the students. Seven of the eighteen students failed to mention the positive evaluation contained within the expression "*freeing up external trade*". When asked what the lecturer thought of the idea, typical responses were "not very clear" or "the lecturer seems to be neutral". This is interesting given that one would expect the "*GOOD IS UP*" metaphor to be universal. Their responses suggest that they found no clues in the surrounding context to indicate that the freeing up of trade may be a good thing. One reason for this may have been that they were less likely than native speakers to have been exposed to recent political rhetoric, in which liberalisation is hailed as a panacea for ailing economies. They may therefore have been less likely to expect to hear such an idea being espoused. There is a small possibility that their failure to identify the lecturer's positive viewpoint was due to even more deep-seated cultural reasons. In order to view the freeing up of trade as a good thing, one needs to tolerate a certain amount of uncertainty in the economy. The fact that the students were from a culture that does not tend to tolerate uncertainty may have affected the way in which they interpreted the expression.

The expression "*it doesn't matter if the cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice*" appeared to be misinterpreted by the majority of the students (15). Typical responses were: "good Government is necessary", "working Government is good" "policy should be workable", and "Government should work properly". Almost none of the students mentioned the fact that a *pragmatic* approach might be desirable. Again, this

could reflect the fact that they came from a value-system in which uncertainty tends to be avoided. In order to fully understand the metaphor, one needs to accept that politicians may not have total control over their policy-making, and may, at times, have to compromise. This view of policy-making may be unfamiliar to students coming from a society in which policy-makers have high levels of control, and do not tolerate uncertainty.

The metaphors that were thought to be related to the power-distance dimension were "*we have these top-down, bottom-up forms of assessment*" and "*trickle down economics*". All of the students understood the term "*top-down, bottom-up forms of assessment*" to mean that assessment took place in two directions. However, despite clues in the context ("we're stuck between many difficult dilemmas", "a lot of ethical problems"), only two of the students mentioned the fact that the lecturer perceived this type of assessment to be potentially problematic. This may have been due to cultural differences as the students may have looked more favourably on high power-distance organisations (as was indicated by their responses to the Hofstede questionnaire). Although the students appeared to have no problems accessing the relevant underlying metaphor (for example, that "*hierarchy is a steep ladder or mountain"*), their evaluation of the situation was more positive than that of the lecturer and of the native speaker judges. Post-test discussion with the students revealed that there is no "bottom-up" assessment within their organisation, and that they had not fully grasped the concept during the lecture. This again, could be related to value differences between the two cultures. Although they had understood the expression, they had missed its evaluative message.

The metaphor "*trickle-down economics*" (extract 4) caused fewer problems. This might be attributable to the fact that the metaphor fits well into a high-power distance value system in which wealth is accrued at the top and takes a long time to get to the bottom. Nevertheless, three of the students claimed that the lecturer had a "very positive" attitude towards this situation. This is in contrast with the views of the native speaker judges and the lecturer herself, who all rated the evaluative content as neutral to negative. Again, this discrepancy between the students and the native speakers may be attributable to the fact that the students came from a society which looks more favourably on high power-distance, and in which wealth is expected to trickle slowly from top to the bottom.

The expression that was thought to reflect the individualist/collectivist dimension, "*to slowly shift the creaking apparatus of public administration*" (extract 5) did not appear to cause problems. All of the students picked up on the underlying metaphor of public administration as a large machine that has to work as one. This finding is in keeping with the fact that the differences found between the students and their lecturers on this dimension were statistically insignificant.

The metaphors that were thought to reflect the ego-oriented/society-oriented dimension were "*cut back the machinery of Government*" (extract 1) and "*we'll let the British economy live or die by the forces of international competition*" (extract 3). Neither of the metaphors caused the students any problems. In extract 1, they were all able to grasp the idea that the public sector needed to be reduced or "downsized" as many of them put it, and many of them felt that withdrawing subsidies would make British businesses stronger. Equally, in extract 3, there was agreement between the native speaker judges, the lecturer, and the students, that the lecturer's opinion was neutral to

negative. One reason for their success in interpreting these metaphors might be the fact that the difference between the lecturers and the students for this value dimension was statistically insignificant. On the other hand, their success in understanding these expressions may have been due to the fact that there were some very clear clues in the surrounding contexts. In extract 1, the lecturer spells out his view very clearly: "it's not good enough to … it's also important to…". Equally, in extract 3, the message is quite clearly negative ("and actually quite a lot of it died").

While we have to acknowledge the complex interplay with other variables (such the availability and the quality of contextual clues), the overall results of the experiment do suggest that the metaphors reflecting the dimensions for which Hofstede's questionnaire revealed cultural differences were most likely to cause comprehension problems.

Conclusions

The findings of this study suggest that students were most likely to interpret the metaphors in ways that supported, rather than contradicted their own value systems. Furthermore, even when they understood the objective content of the metaphors, the students appeared to interpret their *evaluative function* in terms of their own value system, rather than that of the lecturer. They were less likely to mention the evaluative functions of metaphors when these evaluations reflected value systems very different from their own. On the other hand, where the clues in the context were very clear, this seemed to help counteract potential problems caused by cross-cultural differences. Problems only seemed to arise when the clues in the context were less than clear and when they reflected conflicting value systems.

This implies that, in order to truly appreciate what their lecturers are trying to say, and to respond critically, students must be able to analyse their own value system, and the metaphors that these value systems generate. This should enable them to develop a level of cultural competence necessary for them to understand both the subject matter of the lectures, and the lecturers' attitudes towards this subject matter. However, this is a lot to ask of them. As well as all the other difficulties that they face when following lectures (e.g., Flowerdew 1994), students must also be expected to reflect on their own value systems, as well as those of their lecturers, and to make sure that that they have fully understood the views of their lecturers. This is a difficult task, and students are likely to need support from their lecturers. It is important that lecturers realise that students coming from different cultures are likely to hold different sets of values, and that they may interpret the content of the lecture according to their own value systems. Lecturing styles should therefore be adapted accordingly. As we have seen above, the presence of clues in the surrounding context can be a useful aid to students who are trying to interpret difficult metaphors. This suggests that lecturers who wish to convey their own opinions through metaphor should also attempt to provide such clues. On the other hand, the language used by lecturers tends to be spontaneous, and it is not always easy to maintain such a level of awareness of one's own language. An alternative approach to the problem might be for lecturers to adopt a style in which discussion and debate replace the more conventional "chalk and talk" style lecturing, where cultural misunderstandings are likely to go unnoticed. In this type of teaching, students might be more likely to ask for clarification where necessary. Lecturers might also find it useful to discuss with their overseas students the metaphors that are commonly used within their discipline (for

example, a fairly comprehensive list of metaphors that are commonly used in Management Science can be found in Morgan, 1997). Together with their students, they could explore the cultural values and assumptions that lie behind these different metaphors, and identify areas where their own values differ from those of their students. This approach might put both lecturers and students in a better position to critically evaluate the ideas that they are discussing.

Having said this, it is necessary to make a number of caveats. The study described in this article is relatively small in scope, as it only looks at seven metaphors, four value dimensions, and a limited number of students. Furthermore, some of the metaphors, and their surrounding contexts may have been "intrinsically" less transparent than others, and variation in students' scores may to some extent have been due to this, rather than to cross-cultural differences. A larger study is necessary in order to investigate whether its findings can be confirmed. More work in the area will help to further understand the ways in which metaphors are understood, or indeed misunderstood, by people from different cultures.

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Appendix 1: Hofstede's (1980) "Values Survey"

Please think of an ideal job. In choosing an ideal job, how important would it be to you to (please circle one answer number in each line across):

	Of utmost importance	Very important	Of moderate importance	Of little importance	Of very little importance
1. Have sufficient time left for your personal or family life?	1	2	3	4	5
2. Have challenging tasks to do, from which you can get a personal sense of accomplishment?	1	2	3	4	5
3. Have little tension and stress on the job?	1	2	3	4	5
4. Have good physical working conditions (good ventilation and lighting, adequate work space etc.)?	1	2	3	4	5
5. Have a good working relationship with your direct superior?	1	2	3	4	5
6. Have security of employment?	1	2	3	4	5
7. Have considerable freedom to adopt your own approach to the job?	1	2	3	4	5
8. Work with people who cooperate well with one another?	1	2	3	4	5
9. Be consulted by your direct superior in his/her decisions?	1	2	3	4	5
10. Make a real contribution to the success of your organisation?	1	2	3	4	5
11. Have an opportunity for high earnings?	1	2	3	4	5
12. Serve your country?	1	2	3	4	5
13. Live in an area desirable to you and your family?	1	2	3	4	5
14. Have an opportunity for advancement to higher level jobs?	1	2	3	4	5
15. Have an element of variety and adventure in the job?	1	2	3	4	5
16. Work in a prestigious, successful organisation?	1	2	3	4	5
17. Have an opportunity for helping other people?	1	2	3	4	5
18. Work in a well-defined job situation where the requirements are clear?	1	2	3	4	5

The descriptions below apply to four different types of managers. First, please read through these descriptions:

Manager 1   Usually makes his/her decisions promptly and communicates them to his/her subordinates clearly and firmly. Expects them to carry out the decisions loyally and without raising difficulties.

Manager 2   Usually makes his/her decisions promptly, but, before going ahead, tries to explain them fully to his/her subordinates. Gives them reasons for the decisions and answers whatever questions they may have.

Manager 3   Usually consults with his/her subordinates before he/she reaches his/her decision. He/she then expects all to work loyally to implement it whether or not it is in accordance with the advice they gave.

Manager 4   Usually calls a meeting of his/her subordinates when there is an important decision to be made. Puts the problem before the group and invites discussion. Accepts the majority viewpoint as the decision.

19. Now, for the above types of manager, please mark the one which you would prefer to work under (circle one number only):
       1. Manager 1
       2. Manager 2
       3. Manager 3
       4. Manager 4

20. And, to which one of the above four types of managers would you say your own superior most closely corresponds?
       1. Manager 1
       2. Manager 2
       3. Manager 3
       4. Manager 4

21. How often do you feel nervous or tense at work?
       1. I always feel this way
       2. Usually
       3. Sometimes
       4. Seldom
       5. I never feel this way

Please indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Disagree strongly
22. A company or organisation's rules should not be broken – even when the employee thinks it is in the organisation's best interests	1	2	3	4	5
23. Most people can be trusted	1	2	3	4	5
24. I hope to continue working for this organisation for the rest of my working life	1	2	3	4	5

The four value dimensions and their corresponding items:
Uncertainty avoidance was assessed by items 3*, 6*, 15, 18*, 22* and 24*.
Power-distance was assessed by items 7, 8, 9, 19*, 20* and 21*.
The individualist/collectivist dimension was assessed by items 2, 10*, 11, 12*, 14 and 17*.
The ego-oriented/society-oriented dimension was assessed by items 1*, 4*, 5*, 13*, 16 and 23*.
* indicates a reversed item.

Appendix 2

"Managing At The Top": Lecture Extracts

Name: _____

Extract 1
Reducing the size of the public sector is crucial. It may be by privatising, it may be by cutting jobs. It's not good enough just to do that. It's not good enough just to <u>cut the machinery of Government back</u>. It's also important to make it more efficient, and that's what I'm coming to.

Meaning of underlined part:
What does the lecturer think about it?
What do you think about it?

Extract 2
The main element of structural adjustment is the liberalisation of external trade. You know what I mean by that? Dropping tariff barriers. <u>Freeing up external trade</u>, stopping any prohibitions on imports. The second, related to that, is the elimination of exchange rate controls. This is an important part of the IMF's policy, stopping Governments interfering with the value of currencies. In the old days Governments used to fix the exchange rate didn't they? Now it's been freed up hasn't it? It's all part of liberalisation.

Meaning of underlined part:
What does the lecturer think about it?
What do you think about it?

Extract 3
Mrs. Thatcher's view was: "It may hurt for a while, this medicine, but what we'll do is take off the controls. We'll take the controls from the flow of capital, <u>we'll let the British economy live or die by the forces of international competition"</u>, and actually quite a lot of it died.

Meaning of underlined part:
What does the lecturer think about it?
What do you think about it?

Extract 4
I don't know if you've come across the phrase "<u>trickle down economics</u>". The idea being of course that you make the poor richer by making the rich richer. And the wealth of the rich will trickle down to the poor and jobs will be created. And it takes a long time for that to happen. And we concluded as a nation that we couldn't wait for that to happen.

Meaning of underlined part:
What does the lecturer think about it?
What do you think about it?

Extract 5
Blair's Government has attempted <u>to slowly shift the creaking apparatus of public administration</u>, and to change it round from what it had become, to enable it to become capable of solving problems and achieving broad social outcomes like reduced crime and better standards of education.

Meaning of underlined part: What does the lecturer think about it?   What do you think about it?

Extract 6
Now let's consider something that occurs now and again. On things like reports being sent in. What happens if a colleague fails to deliver well? How to bring that sort of an issue to light in an organisation like this? You see, if we were in a business we'd probably take rough action. But we are a team. We're professionals together. We're stuck between many different dilemmas you see. <u>We have these top-down, bottom-up forms of assessment</u>. Being in a business and a university creates a lot of ethical problems.

Meaning of underlined part: What does the lecturer think about it?   What do you think about it?

Extract 7
Since then he has come along with another lot of catchphrases, for example "policy liberalisation". <u>It doesn't matter if the cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice</u>.

Meaning of underlined part: What does the lecturer think about it?   What do you think about it?

Table 1: Selected metaphors and the value dimensions they were used to express

Value dimension	Metaphorical expressions
Uncertainty avoidance	"*Freeing up external trade*" "*It doesn't matter if the cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice*"
Power distance	"*Top-down, bottom-up forms of assessment*" "*Trickle down economics*"
Individualism versus collectivism	"*To slowly shift the creaking apparatus of public administration*"
Ego/social orientation	"*Cut back the machinery of Government*" "*We'll let the British economy live or die by the forces of international competition*".

Table 2: Extent of metaphor (mis)interpretations

Metaphor	Associated value dimension	Difference between cultures in terms of this value dimension	Extent of misinterpretation
"*Freeing up external trade*"	Uncertainty avoidance	Bangladeshis more likely to avoid uncertainty (p<0.01)	Seven students appeared to misinterpret evaluative component
"*It doesn't matter if the cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice*"	Uncertainty avoidance	Bangladeshis more likely to avoid uncertainty (p<0.01)	Fifteen students appeared to misinterpret both meaning and evaluative component
"*We have these top-down, bottom-up forms of assessment*"	Power distance	Bangladeshis more likely to prefer high power distance (p<0.05)	Sixteen students appeared to misinterpret evaluative component
"*Trickle down economics*"	Power distance	Bangladeshis more likely to prefer high power distance (p<0.05)	Three students appeared to misinterpret evaluative component
"*To slowly shift the creaking apparatus of public administration*"	Individualism versus collectivism	Difference not statistically significant	All students understood both meaning and evaluative component
"*Cut back the machinery of Government*"	Ego/social	Difference not statistically significant	All students understood both meaning and evaluative component
"*We'll let the British economy live or die by the forces of international competition*"	Ego/social	Difference not statistically significant	All students understood both meaning and evaluative component