

Title: Exploring Chiastic Thinking, a Ubiquitous but Overlooked Thinking Skill

Presenting author name: Dr. Chen-Yao Kao

Affiliation details of Presenting author: National University of Tainan, Taiwan ROC



Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to explore chiastic thinking, a cognitive approach grounded in the chiastic structure (X-shaped pattern). In this structure, two ideas (A and B) are introduced and then repeated in reverse order (B and A), forming an A-B-B-A configuration. This pattern creates a crisscross effect where the first and last elements reflect one another, whereas the second and second-to-last elements mirror each other. This structural symmetry captures attention and enhances meaning. Chiastic thinking holds a distinctive place in human culture and civilization, yet it remains underexplored. This study presents examples of chiastic thinking in literature, science, and art, highlighting its relevance across diverse domains. The study also delves into related concepts, such as Janusian thinking, dialectical thinking, paradoxical frames, and conceptual contradiction. These terms, though varied, share a common thread: the juxtaposition of opposing ideas. This blending of opposites represents a fundamental cognitive strategy for addressing complex, open-ended problems and explaining puzzling phenomena. Empirical studies examining the impact of combining opposites on creative performance are also discussed, supporting the idea that opposition enhances creativity. Chiastic structure is not merely a visual intersection of two diagonal lines but can be abstracted and expanded to convey a range of meanings, including symmetry, mirror images, reversed parallelism, interchangeability, antagonism, equilibrium, and unity.

Keywords: Chiastic thinking, Janusian thinking, dialectical thinking, paradoxical frames, and conceptual contradiction

Biography:

Dr. Chen-Yao Kao earned both his master's and doctoral degrees in Educational Psychology from the University of Georgia (UGA). He is currently a full professor in the Department of Special Education at the National University of Tainan, Taiwan. His teaching portfolio includes a wide range of graduate and undergraduate courses, with a particular emphasis on creativity, intelligence, and gifted education. His recent research has focused on the intriguing areas of analogy, creative thinking, and conceptual combination. Additionally, he has collaborated with former students to integrate aspects of creative and affective education into the enchanting realm of picture books.