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Metaphor and its Application in Language Teaching and Learning

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ABSTRACT

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Metaphor, as a conceptual and cognitive tool, plays an important role in language learning and teaching. It was once thought to be a stylistic problem, but now it is recognized as an essential part of both ordinary and specialist language and, more significantly, as a basic process of how people conceptualize the world. The use of metaphor in language, thought and communication has been examined in second language (L2) learning. The present paper examines roles of using metaphor in language learning and teaching. First and for most, this paper aims at shedding light on a new facet of Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligence that is metaphoric intelligence. Second, it focuses on the overall history of its utilization in language learning and teaching. Third, a plethora of strategies and activities for its implementation will be discussed in detail. Last but not the least, some problems of its application and justification of its implementation will be touched upon.

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What is metaphor?

Saying one thing while meaning another or drawing comparisons between objects that have something in common, is the usual definition of metaphor. Metaphors are frequently memorable and aid in avoiding long explanations. Students can use it as a tool to improve their communication skills. However, it should be noted that using metaphors excessively could take away from their intended meaning. We can turn imagination into reality and give kids a more solid understanding of meaning by employing metaphor. Both teachers and language learners can utilize it. Teachers can improve their professional statements and classroom practices by using metaphors to help them articulate and construct their ideas (Boers, 2000) .

Most people think they can survive without utilizing metaphor in their daily language and see it only as a means of expressing imagination, but as Chen and Lai (2012) pointed out, metaphor is fundamental to all daily mental and linguistic activity. According to Farías and Véliz (2016), metaphors determine language "usage" rather than being merely practice. They shape how we communicate about everyday events and our everyday conceptual framework, which guides our thoughts and actions, is essentially metaphorical. They contend that metaphor is not limited to language and that metaphor plays a significant role in human mental processes.

Why do we use metaphor?

It is hard to communicate effectively and realistically without the use of metaphor, which may be the main justification—or even the only one, depending on your perspective. Metaphors are an essential and fundamental component of our daily discourse. They are employed to endow the nonphysical with physical properties. Ideas and concepts are given more substance and significance through the use of metaphors. Put another way, because ideas are intangible and cannot be seen, felt, smelled, tasted, or touched, we must solve this problem by using metaphors to meaningfully convey the understandings we have of the world around us. English is extremely rich in many areas, but it cannot adequately convey the abstract essence of things. In these cases, metaphors can help to make meaning clear.

Different Kinds of Metaphor

Littlemore (1998) distinguished between two primary types of metaphors: "frozen" metaphors and "novel" metaphors. "Frozen" metaphors are those that are widely used in the language and that native speakers are frequently believed to see as discrete linguistic components. Metaphors that mix concepts in novel or unexpected ways are called "novel" metaphors. The capacity to utilize both frozen and innovative metaphors is necessary for effective communication in a second language.

The Teachability of Metaphor

The views of metaphor as universal or culturally specific raise a number of issues, including what kinds of metaphors should be taught, how to deal pedagogically with universal metaphors, what kinds of culture-specific metaphors are most pertinent in the context of a foreign language, and how to effectively train and prepare teachers to deliver a metaphor approach. The lack of research on "metaphor" pedagogies—that is, what pedagogical approaches, strategies, methodologies, and techniques can be used for the successful teaching of metaphor—means that, despite the growing body of research in metaphor studies, there is no simple answer to these questions.

According to Littlemore and Low (2006), it has taken a long time for metaphor to make significant headway into mainstream pedagogical practice and the design of teaching materials, despite the fact that many (e.g. Colston & Gibbs, 2021; Hoang, 2014; Littlemore, 2005) have argued in favor of metaphor research as having important implications for second language teaching and learning.

Many scholars have investigated the advantages of metaphor awareness in a range of circumstances related to learning a second language (e.g. Çelik, 2021; Hsiao & Leong, 2018; Picken, 2005). Picken (2005), for instance, looked into how a metaphor-awareness-raising method might improve Japanese English language learners' comprehension of linguistic metaphors in literature. In a cross-linguistic study, Deignan, Gabrys and Solska, (1997) described a translation exercise completed by a group of advanced Polish English language learners. By practicing metaphor awareness, the learners were able to gain a deeper comprehension of metaphor in both L1 and L2. Çelik (2021) investigated Turkish students' attitudes towards English course by using

metaphors. The results of the study indicated that metaphor awareness of understanding idiomatic expressions is highly significant in foreign language.

Teaching Innovatory Metaphor

The easiest sort of activity is just to ask learners to invent a new metaphor. Few people, however, seem to be able to create under this sort of unrestricted condition and there would appear to be more sense in imposing either situational or linguistic constraints or both. The imposition of linguistic constraints could result in learners being given an inventory proposition such as Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) 'love is a communal work of art' and being asked to list the implications to modify conventional expressions in the direction of new metaphor. And invent new expressions where necessary. This activity could be preceded by a discussion about the restrictive focus and undesirable implications of conventional metaphors like 'love is war' or even 'love is food'. Such exercises do focus on metaphors. Learners could be given a concept such as 'an earthquake' or 'food' and asked to think of topics they could be transferred to. This then could be compared with conventional transfers who do exist in English. Conversely, learners could be given a topic like 'the human brain' and asked to examine how our understanding of it has been based on a series of metaphors, linking it with a clock, a digital computer, etc.

Other possible topics might be 'education' or indeed language itself.

Teaching Conventional Metaphor

There seem to be two traditional ways of teaching conventional metaphors. The first is to ask learners to memorize individual expressions which happen to occur in texts. The second is to have learners work through fifty or whatever ways in which 'foot' is used in target language.

Early Perspectives of Using Metaphor

Although current scholarly interest in metaphor dates largely from the late 1970s, it would be wrong to imagine that metaphor has made remarkable concern before this, metaphor is used in language to express thought and emotion almost at the moment that it began. Aristotle (1927) is now cited as the originator of the comparative theory of metaphor, holding that a metaphor is a comparison between two terms that is made to explore the nature of one (Gibbs, 1994). Aristotle also touched upon the capacity of

metaphor to name what is not named or to serve 'human urge' to articulate what is unarticulated (Cooper, 1993, p.40).

Aristotle therefore identified two key attributes of metaphor:

1. The transformation of a conventional meaning through its comparison to something else.
2. The use of a transformed meaning to represent a phenomenon which may be otherwise unnamed.

Metaphor was also seen as something which helps speakers to remember the order of their subject matter. To express the nature of one thing through that of another in order to make it memorable. Thus, a speech could be seen as a building with different rooms storing different topics while the speechmaker imagines them opening one door after another to reveal a room's content (Farias & Lima ,2010). The speechmaker creates a series of metaphors, the speech is a building, and each point made represents the contents of a room.

Metaphoric Intelligence and Foreign Language Learning

According to Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligence, people vary in terms of eight types of intelligence, namely visual, verbal, mathematical, intrapersonal, naturalistic and rhythmic intelligence. It has been said that each of these types of intelligence may have a bearing, not only on a student's ability to learn a foreign language, but also on the teacher's tendency to favor a given teaching method. According to Littlemore (1998), there is another kind of intelligence which is named 'metaphoric intelligence' and it is likely to have an effect on language learning and teaching. Metaphor is so pervasive in language that it would be impossible for a person to speak without using metaphor at some point, whether knowingly or not.

A question might be raised here, and it is this issue that what benefits might metaphoric intelligence bring to the language learning process?

According to Littlemore (1998) :

1. The main benefits that metaphoric intelligence is likely to bring to the learning process are that it enriches language production and facilitate comprehension of metaphoric expressions. It is therefore likely to contribute positively to an overall level of communicative competence.

2. Metaphoric intelligence is also likely to affect a learner's use of communication strategies. Communication strategies are the speaker's attempt to communicate meaningful content, in the face of some apparent lacks in the language system.

Teaching Techniques That Promote Metaphoric Intelligence

One method that encourages both loose analogical reasoning and metaphorical extension is to show them pictures of objects for which they do not know the vocabulary in the target language, and then ask them to explain these pictures to a friend who will have to guess what is in them. To finish this exercise, both the speaker and the listener may be required to use their "metaphoric" imagination.

Bringing up the idea that argumentative writings frequently rest on one or two underlying conceptual metaphors—such as "a theory is a building" or "the economy is a sick patient"—is another tactic to use with the students. After that, they can be given several brief passages and asked to recognize the underlying metaphors as well as analyze the limitations of these metaphors. As a continuation of this practice, students are asked to think critically about the implications of various metaphors they choose to use when describing the same idea. In addition to motivating students to pay great attention to the language, this method can aid in the development of their critical thinking skills .

Regarding the investigation of multiple layering in metaphors, advertising is a valuable source of real material because several messages must frequently be communicated as succinctly as feasible. Pupils might be asked to list the various interpretations that could be made and to think about the various audiences that they might be intended for. An ad that can be especially beneficial for this kind of instruction is "Boddingtons: The Cream of Manchester." Here, the students can talk about the many meanings associated with the word "cream," including its texture, the fact that it typically denotes the best, that it rises to the top, that it is healthy and pure, and so forth. They can then continue by talking about further applications for the word, thereby refining their "metaphoric extension" skills.

Metaphor As a Unifying Theory

Recent language theory has failed to produce an approach that is meaningful or consistent. Since the decline of behaviorism there has been a distance between the methods through which language is described and the mechanism through which it is taught to be acquired or learned. Communicative methodology is divided into what Howatt (1984) calls the weak and the strong approaches. The weak one supposes an interest in how we use grammar and lexical phrases to realize a given communicative function such as telling a story. And the second which is strong one suggests a meaning-focused approach where students are distracted from thinking about language per se by their need to use it in problem solving tasks or 'procedures' as Prabhu (1987) called them.

Regarding what discussed in the above part, there is an evident lack of relationship between communicative language teaching theory and acquisition theory. Second language acquisition theory is based on Krashen's (1981 & 1982) clear distinction between two processes:

- Conscious learning, resulting in a monitored and hesitant use of language.
- Unconscious acquisition where learners rediscover the facilities that helped them to acquire their first languages.
- According to Holme and King (2000) what metaphor does here is that it builds an abstract meaning in language. But metaphor is also a mechanism of learning. We grasp new knowledge by analogy to the models we already possess. (pietric & Oshlag, 1993)

According to Holme and King (2000), for EFL specialist, metaphor enfolds itself within the three points of meaning construction/ constructed meaning, learning and affect. It can thus conjoin the three aspects of successful language learning.

Using metaphor to bridge the gap between learning theory and language theory

According to Holme and King (2000), metaphor is a linguistic cue to how the mind structures meaning. According to him, metaphor is also a manifestation of cognitive process that is central to our capacity to generalize our learning and to make a creative response to new circumstance. Metaphor can thus stand as a link between the nature of

language and the nature of learning process. Metaphors uncover a process where we conceptualize a new knowledge by framing it inside what is already known.

Using Metaphor for Teaching Proposition And Phrasal Verbs

According to Littlemore (1998), expressions such as ‘look up to someone’ and ‘look forward to something’ can be traced to the original metaphors of ‘good is up’ and ‘bad is down’ and ‘time is a journey’. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) believe these types of metaphors provide a framework for all abstract thought. Their ideas are conserve as a good introduction to the basic meanings of prepositions and particles.

If the phrasal verbs to be learned are presented in context, students can be encouraged to use the basic meanings of the prepositions and particles to help them work out the meaning of phrasal verbs. At first sight, a phrasal verb would appear to be a ‘lexical chunk’ or idiom. A feature that identifies some phrasal verb is a specialty of meaning that cannot be predicted from the individual meaning of the verb and the particle or preposition of which it is composed. Thus, the meaning of ‘put up’ in ‘put up your friends for a night’ cannot be constructed from knowledge of the meaning of ‘put’ and ‘up’. Another difficulty is that the same verb particle combination can have more than one meaning. For example, ‘look up the information’, ‘look up an old friend’, or ‘look up and see’. According to Holme and King (2000), the same proposition may modify its verb differently because the preposition is drawing its meaning from a different metaphorical extension of the original meaning. Therefore, as it is clear, this argument is another argument in favor of using metaphor in language teaching.

Expressing Time

Tense represents another area where metaphor can be used in language teaching classrooms. According to Holme (2004), two types of metaphorization can be employed. The first one involves finding a metaphor such as a timeline to represent the constraints governing use and the second one is a closer focus on the process through which a given structure may have been grammaticalized. Like other grammatical items, tense also offers teachers the possibility of re-inserting a construction into the conceptual metaphor. in their turns these metaphors may proffer a stronger sense of how the item is used. One problematic item in English is the distinction between the present perfect and past simple tense. For this purpose, a metaphor had been planed which

involved drawing the plan of a prison as a rectangle on the board. The idea was that the past simple forms represented actions that were imprisoned in the past while the past participles were acting as free agents and could be conceptualized into actions that had been repeated since the past. Here is an example from this procedure:

1. The teacher tells students the past simple of a verb then asks them to change it into an irregular past participle. The teacher writes each past participle and each past simple onto separate pieces of paper as they elicit the correct form from the students.
2. The teacher distributes the papers with the participles to the students.
3. Students say they have in their hands their participles. Other students try to remember what they have.
4. The teacher indicates to students A and B. student A says s/he has 'spoken'. Student B replies either: 'yes I have', or 'no I haven't, I have eaten'
5. The teacher draws a prison diagram on the board and says past simple forms are imprisoned in the past. Present perfect forms are being released from the past and brought toward the present as if in the subject's hand. The teacher suggests a completed past action, for example 'I ate my first meal in a restaurant' and sticks the verb 'ate' inside the prison then suggests one that continues into the present 'I have eaten' then pull it outside the prison, on the road to the present.

By using metaphor, as it is clear from above example, teachers may be able to bridge the gap between theoretical and practical knowledge if they impart metaphors in teaching grammar part. Teachers can think more about using metaphors rather than situations to show how a grammatical structure should be employed.

Above all we must be aware that syntax has two parts, meaning and grammar. Grammar then must be taught as well as meaning that language users like to express it to achieve to their goals in creating communication. As a conclusion, I can say that teachers should not be focused much on grammar as abstract meaning. They can make it more tangible by imparting metaphor in their teaching grammar; in this case students' minds will be more preoccupied with meaning.

Cognitive Metaphor in Teaching Writing

According to Desmet (2008), in terms of teaching the writing process, cognitive metaphor is most useful in teaching invention and arrangement. Studies of basic writers suggest that they organize thought and prose sequentially. For exercises in explication, the students could imitate and follow the metaphoric shape of the work about which they are writing, which narrows the gap between reading and writing.

On the other hand, self-consciousness about metaphoric structure can help students articulate relationships between the structure they read and the common places that shape their writing. Finally, Desmet (2008) concluded that if the grammar of metaphor is put into dialectic with rhetoric of metaphor, the writing teacher can comfortably use literature to teach writing. Again, as it is clear, teachers by using metaphor can bridge between reading and writing and through reading literary passages they can make students familiar with different styles and this case pave the way for them in order to write better.

Using Metaphor to Increase Student Vocabulary

Metaphors provide a memorable way of organizing new vocabulary to be learned. Most teachers are familiar with the notion of lexical set, where vocabulary is grouped according to a topic area, such as ‘food’ or ‘transport’. This idea can be extended to create metaphorical sets, where we group together the words and expressions that have metaphorical, rather than a literal meaning. Here are some examples:

Body vocabulary: the heart of the city, the foot of the mountain/bed/stairs, to give a hand, to break somebody’s heart.

Weather vocabulary: a warm welcome, to freeze somebody out, to be snowed under, to storm out.

Color vocabulary: to see red, a gray area, a white lie, to give somebody the green light.

Two activities: in the classroom, there are different ways we can incorporate this idea of metaphorical sets.

1. Ask students in groups to research and design a poster related to a particular topic. For example, students could be asked to draw an outline of a human body on a large sheet of paper, and to include a heart, feet, hand, eye, nose, etc. Using English dictionaries, they could then research any metaphorical uses of language

connected with the different parts of the body and write them in appropriate place on the poster. The same activity can be done for weather vocabulary or colors (using sheets of paper of different colors).

2. Ask students to brainstorm the words in a particular lexical area, such as plants. They may come up with words such as: roots, branches, seed, to blossom, to bloom, to plant. Once you have checked that students have understood the literal meaning of all the words involved, ask them to guess what the metaphorical meaning of these words might be. And once you have established the metaphorical meanings for these words (such as the roots of a problem or to plant an idea in somebody's mind) ask students to write a story using as many of these words as they can. I find the stories are always very inventive, and reveal the real pleasure that students take in using language creativity.

As it is obvious, many metaphors in English form part of the ordinary repertoire of the native speaker. We can help students to learn some of these fixed metaphors while simultaneously encouraging them to play creatively with language. One way is to ask students to write short poems with one of the following titles:

Weather metaphor: a sunny smile, an icy look, a stormy relationship.

People metaphors: a chip off the old block, a rough diamond, a shoulder to cry on, an ugly duckling, a fairy godmother.

Developing Student Autonomy

Teachers can develop students' awareness of metaphors by encouraging students to collect metaphors, by writing them down when they encounter them on the internet, in pop songs, etc. These metaphors can then be explained and discussed in the classroom. Teachers may even want to keep a record of these on a wall poster and at the end of term ask students to vote on the most useful metaphor, the most surprising metaphor, their favorite metaphor, etc.!

Figurative Meanings Are Culturally Determined

According to Brown (2000), language and culture are intricately intertwined. Any time you successfully learn a language, you will also learn something of the culture of the speakers of that language and whenever you teach a language, you also teach a complex system of cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.

The kinds of figurative language we use stems from the underlying values and assumption of our culture or society as well understood metaphor in one culture may have certainly different meaning in another part of the world. To take an example, the figurative meaning of different colors varies from one language to another (Brown, 2000). As a result, the conventional association in British English between the color 'green' and 'nature' and 'innocence' might not be the same to students in other cultures. Students may need to be aware of the associations in order to make sense of idiomatic usage like 'to be green' and 'to have green fingers' as well as more literary uses of the color green .

Our task as teachers is to sensitize students to the culture significance which occurs to examples of figurative language in English, which encourage them to compare these associations with those in their own language.

The Problems and Causes of Metaphor In Foreign Language Learning

Because metaphor is conceptually appropriate and stems from people's unique experiences of the world, it is influenced by a wide range of things, including politics, culture, and even personal traits. For this reason, it is normal for language learners to experience difficulties when trying to understand and use metaphor from the viewpoint of a native speaker. The comprehension and creation of metaphors pose challenges for learners of foreign languages when using them. For instance, when it comes to comprehension, individuals could struggle to determine which elements of the source domain are often transferred to the target domain, which could result in mistakes made in both production and understanding (Littlemore, 2001). The research by Littlemore (2001) and Low, Littlemore, and Koester (2008), which examined the use of metaphor in three academic lectures, show that while metaphor usage is common in English language learning for foreign speakers, there are many challenges that these speakers face when trying to comprehend the thoughts and viewpoints of native speakers .

The main issue with foreign language learners' ability to produce metaphors is that, in most cases, their metaphors sound non-native, which means that rather than accurately communicating their ideas, the students end up making mistakes that hinder them from communicating their true communicative intents. Why then do these issues arise? Drawing from earlier research and observations: First, because metaphors cut over

linguistic boundaries and cultural boundaries, it is simple for non-native speakers of a foreign language to translate words incorrectly from their mother tongue into the target language, producing grammatically and semantically incorrect sentences. Second, most of the foreign language instruction employs pictures and visuals to help students grasp and retain meaning while explaining metaphors in class. However, this can divert their focus away from the actual words used in the linguistic expression. Ultimately, there's a difference between creating and comprehending metaphors. The issue of metaphor creation will still arise for students, even if they comprehend metaphors well. Understanding does not equate to being able to create. Rather than grammatical errors, conceptual understanding is the main factor that influences foreign language learners' ability to advance in the language. For instance, Chinese English language learners frequently lament that although they are aware of and comprehend the proper usage of certain terms and phrases, they are unable to employ them appropriately when speaking or writing .

Conclusion

In most language courses, learning and teaching a new language requires a lot of time and mental effort. Techniques that can lessen cognitive load and streamline laborious learning processes should be given careful thought. This paper was an attempt to examine the roles that using metaphor plays in accelerating language learning. As it was mentioned through this paper, metaphor plays an important role in teaching language especially in teaching time expressions, preposition, grammar and also vocabulary. Teachers should notice that sometimes some metaphors have different meanings in different cultures; consequently, teachers are required to draw students' attention to these kinds of differences. Although teaching metaphor may cause some problems and make students confused, using metaphor is useful and necessary in teaching and learning process. As a result, in English language teacher education programs, as much as attention is given to pre-service teachers' preparedness and readiness to teach the formal aspects of language, attention must also be paid to equipping them with the professional knowledge to help students develop socio-cultural and sociolinguistic skills to use and comprehend the English language more effectively.

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