

***Revolutionary Potential of Metaphors for English Language
Teaching and Learning***

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The Asian Conference on Education 2018
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Metaphors, in the form of visual symbols or stories have been long used by our ancestors to bestow their wisdom and belief to their children. It is essentially not a new tool in education field for it is long used to present ideas and to gain insights for generations. Metaphors help us describe, visualize, and make sense of the world around us. Recent studies highlighted how metaphors play prominent role in structuring thought and motivating everyday language. It is one of the major forces behind linguistic creativity and is not only used to create lexical domains, but also for grammatical constructions. A crucial mark in the study of metaphor from a cognitive perspective was established by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980 with the publication of their revolutionary book *Metaphors We Live By*. According to this view, human thinking is largely structured in metaphorical terms. The theory puts forward the idea that both verbal and non-verbal language used to express perceptions and feelings, as well as ordinary language, are significantly linked to our capacity to conceive one thing in terms of another (events, entities, concepts). Using exploratory research design, this paper investigates the possibilities of utilizing metaphors for English language teaching and learning and how metaphors may be used to develop learner's knowledge on English language and literature, as well as their own native cultures. A description on teaching practices and various literary sources upon metaphors are presented to offer the new insight on ELT issues.

Keywords: metaphor, education, ELT

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Introduction

The use of metaphor is unavoidable since the world we observe is not substantive, “there is no one-to-one correspondence between words and what we experience.” (Papin, 1992, p. 1256). Everything around us is filled with metaphors, especially in a form of language. In other words, we can say that naturally language itself is metaphor. They indeed play prominent role in structuring thought and motivating everyday language. Metaphor is one of the major forces behind linguistic creativity and is not only used to create lexical domains, but also for grammatical constructions. It holds significant part of communication, and is unique in each society. In his *De Poetics*, Aristotle wrote that “the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars.” (Garfield, 1986, p.316)

To our general knowledge, metaphors are used especially in literature and poetry, as a high form of artistic creativity. Metaphor in literary reading involves psychological processes and it is due to the fact that reception is a mental process that takes place on the basis of individual acts of reading. Such mental processes of meaning construction can be modelled up to help us analyze the text. Since metaphor deals with human cognitive capacity, we can analyze the phenomena from cognitive approach; “This cognitive approach to metaphor has grown into one of the most exciting fields of research in the social sciences, with psychologists leading the way for cognitive linguists...” (Steen, 1994, p. 3).

In the present time, researchers have started to acknowledge that metaphor is more than just an ornament that decorates language. There has been a growing concern in humanities that metaphors used in language shows some basic pattern about the way human brain works; they operate at multiple levels of analysis to provide insight into how we understand an organizational life. It may also reflect human language system and the systematic metaphors in our thought (Gavins and Steen, 2003, p. 9). By that reason, metaphors have gained prominent interest from researchers. The understanding of the role of metaphorical patterning in cognitive processes has driven cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics to radical new insights in the study of the mind (Stockwell, 2002, p.105). Hence, metaphor is believed to be primarily conceptual, conventional, and part of the ordinary system of thought and language; “Upon investigation, it appears that many ordinary expressions and ways of representing the world rely on metaphorical mappings, even when most of us do not realize the fact.” (Stockwell, 2002, p.109) Metaphor has been regarded to become intelligible as a highly revealing instance of the human capacity for making sense.

Traditionally, and until today, metaphor has been long used by our ancestors to bestow their wisdom and belief to their children. The uses of metaphor are culturally embedded amongst different group of people and are embodied in their identity in everyday activity. In its initial uses, metaphors are also appears vastly in religions to embrace their faith in God or the greater power, and in early science to study the universe; “The illustrations in the Old and New Testament, the sacred writings of Kabbalah, the teachings of Zen Buddhism, the allegories in literature, the poetical images and the stories of the storytellers – they all use metaphor in order to argument an idea in an indirect and paradoxically, more fully understandable way.” (Csorba,

p.766) Metaphor can transform something considered to be complex or hard to explain, to become comprehensible and more 'real'. Metaphors help us describe, visualize, and make sense of the world around us. Hence, metaphor is essentially not a new tool in education field for it is long used to present ideas and to gain insights for generations in all societies.

As educators, we need to understand more about the obstacles that a subject has in order to provide more solutions to students' problems in learning. Metaphor can help to comprehend concepts that are difficult to reach. In science, metaphors have been long used to bridge the understanding of the metaphysical concepts including quantum theories. In language learning, the difficulty might come from the differences of culture, and therefore, the world view of the learners from the complex concept, such as foreign language grammar. Nevertheless, any educational metaphor is more or less associated with paradigms, ideologies and beliefs. The deciphered of the metaphor's hidden meaning, enables transactions between different contexts representation of the same order to improve its realities. The pedagogical metaphor can open doors to new worlds of comprehension in an educational and philosophical level.

Literature Review

Metaphor is a figure of speech. All metaphors consist of a source domain and a target domain and metaphor comprehension requires the listener to identify some kind of relationship between these domains. Therefore, one must be aware of a wide range of connotations for both the source and target domains, and identify those that are being referred to by that particular speaker in that particular context. Successful metaphor comprehension frequently involves making maximum use of the context.

The study of metaphor underwent a major shift since the publications of Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980. They challenged the traditional view of metaphor with their basic premise of which is that metaphor is not simply a stylistic feature of language, but that thought itself is fundamentally metaphorical. Metaphor is no longer considered as a figure of speech, but rather as a figure of thought. The use of it is not limited within works of literature only, but to everyday speech and moreover to other areas outside linguistic. However, the cognitive view that metaphor is more of 'a figure of thought' emphasizes that it is a knowledge rather than meaning that is responsible for the interpretation of similarity which lies at the basis of process of understanding one thing in terms of another (Lakoff 1986 in Steen, 1994, p.11). Hence, they ushered a new theory of metaphor, a cognitive linguistic theory whose basic theoretical manifestation is conventionally referred to as Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lundhaug, 2010, p.24).

Conceptual metaphors theory has become the earliest and most important theory in cognitive semantic approach. "Ever since Lakoff and Johnson (1980) it has been commonplace in cognitive semantic to say that metaphor is not a matter of 'mere language' but is something conceptual." (Crisp in Gavins, 2003, p. 99) Furthermore Crisp argues that "Conceptual metaphors typically projects experientially basic categories onto more abstract ones." (p. 100) In other words, conceptual metaphors are conceptual packaging of reality understood in their own terms because they have evolved to facilitate our everyday functioning in the world. Kovecses (2005) also

indicated that the analysis of metaphors in language could reveal a great deal of patterning. This strongly suggests that at least on an unconscious level, the linguistic metaphors also manifest elaborate structures.

Metaphor has scientific utility, it is a fact hardly ignored that science has been using metaphors in attempt to explain the natural phenomena around us; “Scientist, too, use metaphor to transform the objects of their perception.” (Woods, 2009, p. 10). Ricoeur in *The Rule of Metaphor* (cited in Woods) explains that the power of metaphor lies in its capacity to redescribe the world. Boyd in Ortony (1993, p. 538) also argues that genuine metaphors (analogies) are also fundamental to science, providing an occasion, “an irreplaceable part of linguistic machinery of a scientific theory.” The use of metaphor, nonetheless, are a bound in science; “Metaphor maybe inevitable and necessary to science and cognitively prior to scientific description, because of psychological factors in learning, inference-making, symbol-formation, and explanation.” (Hoffman, 1979, p. 406). By that reason, scientific language functions with the same complexity as literary discourse does.

Some models in the use of metaphors in science have been conducted through several well-known theories. In Biology field study, Darwin’s famous “entangled bank” metaphor from the *Origin of Species* has been used to explain the wondrous functioning of natural selection. In Physics, Albert Einstein’s metaphor of dropping stone from a moving railway carriage is used to explain his revealing theory of relativity and the curvature of space (Woods, 2009, p.13). The theory of science mostly evokes mental image, especially when they try to explain microscopic being that cannot be observed naked eye. Words traditionally considered as purely scientific and descriptive such as *electron*, *particles*, and *atoms* were not as transparent as we expected. Physicists believed that physics theory is tough to explain not because it is hard to grasp but because the language itself is not adequate to explain the marvels. Robert Frost strongly believed about the importance of metaphor in gathering around the data and material recalled Walt Whitman’s confidence that poetry can help the nation to understand the role of science in everyday life. Whitman plots the connection between the earth and celestial beings in *Leaves of Grass* metaphor: “a leaf of grass is no less the journeywork of the stars” (Woods, 2009, p.7-8). Both poets agreed that science must be brought to life, animated, and made beautiful; it is through the gathering of metaphors that makes such attempt possible. Despite its regard as scientific utility, some in philosophy of science and psychology doubted about the effectiveness of metaphor to formulate theories. They argued that we should avoid any ambiguities and vagueness of everyday language. In other words, they maintained that scientific logical should be purely logical-rational affair.

Methodology

This study uses exploratory research design as the main method in order to provide several examples of the using of pedagogical metaphor in English language learning. It intends merely to explore the research questions and does not intend to offer final and conclusive solutions to existing problems. This type of research is usually conducted to study a problem that has not been clearly defined yet. It has been noted that exploratory research is the initial research, which forms the basis of more conclusive research since it tends to tackle new problems on which little or no previous research has been done. Hence, this article viewed two earlier researches

about the use of media and material in English language teaching done by English lecturers in Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia, from the perspective of metaphors in education.

Visual Metaphor for English Poems

English literature is compulsory subject for students of English education and literature major in ESL/EFL countries, including Indonesia. The study of English literature which is generally divided into poetry, prose, and drama, are usually given to the second and third year of college students. However, poetry is commonly found as the most challenging subject to teach and to learn amongst any other genres. This problem is commonly appeared amongst the students for the lack of interest and difficulty in comprehending the text.

The problem in learning English poetry is not only identified in Indonesian university but in other country where English serves as second language or foreign language. Hirvela and Boyle (1988) quoted in Khatib (2012) report that only 6% of the Hong Kong Chinese students who were involved in the survey favoured poetry more than other literary genres and 73% of them found poetry the most difficult and intimidating literary form. The problems in learning poetry for ESL/EFL students are due to its complex language and infamous interest for the students as well as for the teachers. Moreover, the problem of learning poetry is also common in the countries where English serves as the main or native language, as I. A. Richards noted more than half a century ago in his seminal book *Practical Criticism* (1929), the chief problem faced by the student of poetry is “the difficulty of making out [the poem’s] plain sense” (Hoepfer 1990, p.82).

Hence, it is found that the focal problem in learning poetry is not mainly caused by the cultural differences, but simply in realizing and visualizing the images of poetry or the figures of speech. It is important to see poetry in its total framework at first since in order to understand poetry content, one must imagine or visualize the figure of speeches that occur in a poem. It is a well-known phrase that a picture says a thousand words and a poem paints a thousand pictures. In one hand, every visual art speaks something about the characteristics of particular existence, while in the other hand; a poem is a verbal art that contains figures of speech that needs to be visualized in mind.

A visual metaphor is the representation of a person, place, thing, or idea by means of a visual image that suggests a particular association or point of similarity. It’s also known as pictorial metaphor and analogical juxtaposition. According to Robert N. St. Clair in *Visual Metaphor, Cultural Knowledge, and the New Rhetoric* (2002), visual information is also another way of knowing, and it too is virtually invisible in the modern culture. St. Claire also pointed out that the metaphor of verbal form is highly significant in Western culture and has dominated centuries of social and cultural epistemological scripts. Regardless the existing assumption, Frederik in her book *English Poetry: An Introduction to Indonesian Students* (1988) stated that the best way to learn foreign language is actually through learning their culture since culture is reflected through the use of language (also Kramsch 1998, p.3). To help Asian English learners get better understandings of what the modern western life philosophy

is and how western people form their culture in their society, it is essential for EFL teachers to teach culture by metaphor in EFL class.

As a matter of fact, the tradition of relating visual and verbal arts has been dated back to the ancient era. Horace, a Greek philosopher in his book *Epistles* writes to his fellow “*ut pictura poesis*” which means, poetry is like a painting. These lines are often cited as the foundational text establishing a connection between visual and verbal arts (Corn, 2008): “Horace, in his *Epistles*, writes a verse letter to his friend Pisos, the opening lines of which develop the metaphor of painting as a means of criticizing arbitrary combinations of incompatible components in a poem. (This is the third letter of Book II of the *Epistles*.)”

Kehl (1978) states that any work of literature has visual characteristics because of the inherent power of words to evoke visual image, “to understand words, it seems to be natural and necessary for the mind to translate them into visual images; conversely, understanding visual images seems to be enhanced by “translation” into words” (p. 3). In other words, in the realm of literature, image essentially resides in poetry, prose, and drama. All that it takes to realize this is the imagination of the reader in relating the images to get the whole ‘picture’ or idea. In drama we can see the play performance visually, in prose we could have glimpse of picture that depicts certain scene in the story going on, while from poetry we get imagery words with a much comprised idea: “Images have always been important in poetry because they force us to become sensually involved in the experience of a poem. An image is generally recognized to be any particular arrangement of words which awakens a sensory response on the part of the reader.” (Thompson, 1970)

In the past time, some English poets also painted their own poems to emphasize the images of the poem. William Blake one of the famous poets from Romantic Age, is one of the poets who paints some of his own poems. Although he was unrecognized for his talents during his lifetime, Blake is now considered as a seminal figure in the history of poetry and visual arts. Aristotle also argues that art is mimetic which means that it is mirroring life; therefore, art is the imitation of life. Since art is imitation, it never has the complete elements of reality “The work of art, although an illusion of reality, represents a heightened form of reality, a “true lie” (Kehl 1978, p.10). Furthermore Kehl wrote, “Neither kind of art is, of course, identical to life. A painting of a chair is not the same as the chair...” (p. 2). The principal works in the same way for selecting the ‘right’ picture for visualizing the selected poetry. Teachers might likely to choose the most suitable and accessible visual arts whether in form of picture, photograph or painting. The standard of choosing a suitable picture therefore, can be traced back to the elements of the particular poetry that is going to be discussed or analyzed. The poetry elements here refer to the ‘visual’ ones, which is the figures of speech. They can be found in the figurative languages of poetry, more precisely, the imagery that mostly dominates the major theme of the poem, for a special kind of imagery employed by poetry and painting alike is the metaphor which is derived from a Greek word meaning “vehicle,” it transports us from the realm of one object into the realm of another” (Kehl 1978, p.3, Panofsky 1982, p.12). Nevertheless, any picture could be used to represent the reality depicted in poetry as long as the picture could serve as a suitable informing image for the relationship between poetry and the visual arts and considerably could trigger the imagination of the students.

Even after the use of visual image students might still have different interpretation for the various experience and knowledge in poetry and in life: “The incorporation of both visual and verbal resources into a narrative text has the potential to extend the narrative repertoire and to provide greater differentiation and/or greater depth of experience depending on how well realized the text is as a whole.” (Doloughan 2011, p.26) However, by using visual images, students are guided to comprehend the content of poetry without straying too far from the imagery given in the poem; the use of visual image could give way for students to embrace the total framework of poetry, to get its main idea, and to interpret it based on the actual imagery stated in the poetry.

Film Metaphor for English Grammar

Grammar is central to the teaching and learning of languages. It is also one of the more difficult aspects of language to teach well. Many people, including language teachers, hear the word "grammar" and think of a fixed set of word forms and rules of usage. They associate good grammar with the prestige forms of the language, such as those used in writing and in formal oral presentations, and bad or no grammar with the language used in everyday conversation or used by speakers of non-prestigious forms. Grammar is urgently needed to master by all learners of any languages since it becomes essential principles to make grammatical sentences, phrases, or words (Thornburry, 1999 p. 1) In other words, mastering grammar is the foundation in the proficiency of a language. In general, tenses is the fundamental for English grammar. Furthermore, the theory of teaching tenses is also inseparable from the theory of teaching Grammar. Thornburry (1999, p. 1) says that Grammar is part of a study of the shape (structure) that exist in a particular language. Grammar is essentially trying to explain how the form of a language that can be accepted, so it is important for the learners to study the forms of grammar of a language in order to facilitate them in understanding the meaning of a sentence in a language.

Implication of teaching grammar is inseparable from the utilization of instructional media. Research conducted by Sandhya and Bhuvaneswari (2014) found that the use of media as a tool for teaching Grammar could facilitate a better teaching. The implementation of learning techniques is still insufficient without the use of media in order to support the success of teaching grammar in the classroom. Moreover, as mentioned previously that instructional media has many types and forms, one of which is now much in demand is the use of video. There are many reasons why the use of video as a medium of learning a language is strongly recommended. Harmer (2004, p. 282) explains some of the reasons as to why the language teacher is advised to use video as a medium of learning and teaching. The first is that language learners not only hear the language they learn, but they also look at the context directly from the video being played. Video will be a marvelous medium that represents expressions, gestures and other visual forms. The second is the knowledge of cultural differences. Video will enable students to see situations outside the classroom without having to leave the classroom. The third is learning material in the media would be easy to remember because it is fun. Fourth, the video can enhance students' motivation and interest in learning. It is as described previously that students not only learn how to see, but also listen, and it will be interesting for them so their motivation to learn will also increase.

Mastering English Grammar becomes a necessity for English Language Education Program in Faculty of Cultural Studies, Universitas Brawijaya because, ideally, they must be equipped with English Grammar competence when they are graduated as *Sarjana Pendidikan*. However, the fact shows that many students of the last semester are still weak in mastering grammar. This is documented on their undergraduate thesis writing. To support this finding, the researchers distributed questionnaire consisting of two open-ended questions dealing with the most difficult material in learning grammar and the reason why it is determined as the most difficult one. The respondents of the questionnaire were all of the second semester students in academic year 2015/2016 who were taking Fundamental English Grammar. The result of the questionnaires revealed that 72 % of the students said that the most difficult material was tenses. Further, they claimed that they still found difficulties in understanding English tenses especially on how to differentiate verb tenses in different context of sentences and how to use subject verb agreement although they have already got such materials since they were in high schools. (Unsiyah et al, 2016)

The lecturers of English Language Education Program in Faculty of Cultural Studies, Universitas Brawijaya have been trying to increase students' knowledge and skills on producing not only fluency and meaningfulness but also accuracy on grammar use. To achieve the learning goal, the researchers as the lecturers of the Program proposed to develop video as an instructional media to teach English tenses in the form of film. The researchers believe that this kind of video is considered as appropriate instructional media to deliver English grammar tenses because it consists of various characters that perform particular expressions and gestures in particular plot and setting.

The product developed was video for teaching English tenses entitled "Better Grammar" for students of English Language Education Program. The duration of the video is precisely 30.12 minutes and based on its original script, it is divided into 9 scenes. The script was design to fit the basic 12 English tenses into an interesting story plot for early semester students of Higher Education in Indonesian context. The tenses are: Simple Present Tense, Present Continuous Tense, Present Perfect Tense, Present Perfect Continuous, Simple Past Tense, Past Continuous Tense, Past Perfect Tense, Past Perfect Continuous, Simple Future Tense, Future Continuous Tense, Future Perfect Tense, Future Perfect Continuous. The movie script emphasizes on the comprehension of the concept of each tenses and to visually illustrate the explanations. (Unsiyah et al, 2016)

The summary of the movie script is about an English Education Student (Fajar) who finds his lack of understanding of English tenses in the Grammar class. Having learnt English for many years since Primary school, he realizes that he still is not very adept in using English tenses in practice. He gets distressed until he finds that there is another student (Maharani/Rani) who seems to have better understanding about tenses. He then tries to make acquaintance with Rani and ask her favor to help him in understanding English tenses. Rani agrees and they develop friendship as they study together. The Past Tenses (Simple, Continuous, Perfect, and Perfect Continuous) are illustrated through the experience of Fajar in his past, how he came to dislike English subject back in Senior High School and how it has affected his learning ever since. The Present Tenses are illustrated when they continue to study together in the park in

another day. The Future Tenses are explained within Fajar's letter for Rani as he is about to leave for Sydney for 3 months for a student exchange program.

The video development on teaching English tenses as supporting visual teaching media is considered appropriate for it helps lecturers in delivering materials on English tenses since these materials as parts of Grammar are known as one of the most difficult aspects of language to teach well. Thornburry (1999, p. 1) says that Grammar is part of a study of the structure that exists in a particular language. Grammar is essentially trying to explain how the form of a language that can be accepted, so it is important for the learners to study the forms of grammar of a language in order to facilitate them in understanding the meaning of a sentence in a language. It is also supported by Sandhya and Bhuvanawari (2014) who state that the use of media as a tool for teaching Grammar could facilitate a better teaching. The implementation of learning techniques is still insufficient without the use of media in order to support the success of teaching grammar in the classroom.

Conclusion

This study highlighted the importance of analogical reasoning in learning language and the specific use of metaphorical media as vehicles for learning English language. Researches show that the uses of metaphors served educational purposes as teaching media and produced foundational knowledge in learning English grammar for Indonesian students. Additionally, the use of metaphors was an opportunity to promote teacher awareness of his/her own teaching since metaphor production needs a deep level of knowledge in a field. In this study the authors view metaphors as vehicles and apply it to draw upon English language teacher's methods and media in making their explanation visible. This study shows that metaphor can provide communicative and facilitator character of learning. It is possible to conclude that analogical reasoning and metaphors are vehicles for learning as it is recognized their pedagogical power to enhance students motivation and to deep knowledge production and acquisition. To conclude, it seems that metaphors and reasoning by analogy are important to introduce students to a scientific field, but they are not expected to remain valid in the records of scientific production, at least those who are novices at it. Further studies need to be done to prove the effectiveness of metaphorical media and methods in language learning, especially English for foreign languages.

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