An Evaluation of Metaphor Usage in Secondary School English Textbooks

تقييـــم شواهـد الاستعـارة في كتب اللغــة الإنجليزيـــة للطــور الثانـــوي

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Abstract:

The present study evaluates the place of metaphor in the Algerian educational settings, and more precisely in the textbooks of English At the Crossroads Secondary School Year One, Getting Through Secondary Year Two, and New Prospects Secondary Year Three. It also attempts to analyse the English Foreign Language textbooks in respect to metaphor credit. To achieve the purpose of the study, the researchers applied a descriptive quantitative method. The results showed that the textbooks do not give an account to metaphor use. The findings gathered in this study might be used to re-plan, re-draft, re-edit, and improve the textbooks in terms of developing the learners' cognitive thinking. In our view, the present findings have also an important implication for EFL textbook-designers and teachers alike to be aware of the contents that should be taught.

Keywords: Conceptual, EFL, Metaphor, Syllabus, Textbooks

الملخص:

تحاول الدراسة تقييم مكانة الاستعارة في منهاج اللغة الانجليزية، وبشكل أكثر دقة في كتب اللغة الإنجليزية للطور الثانوي كما تناولت بالتحليل شواهد الاستعارة. لتحقيق الغرض من الدراسة، طبق

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الباحثان المنهج الكمي الوصفي. ومن النتائج المتوصل إليها ما يمكن أن يكون سندا لإعادة تقييم الكتاب المدرسي هو أن الكتب المدرسية لم تتضمن شواهد كثيرة للاستعارة، وعليه فإن نتائج هذه الدراسة تفرض على القائمين على المنهاج المدرسية إعادة النظر في محتوى الكتب المدرسية من أجل تطوير التفكير المعرفي لدى التلاميذ.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المفاهيمي، الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية، الاستعارة، المنهاج، الكتب المدرسية.

Introduction

The role of metaphor in an EFL context has generated a great deal of discussion and interest in recent years in the field of foreign language teaching and learning. In fact, many educational scholars and researchers agree that the use of metaphor can be very advantageous to teachers and students. However, since the field of teaching foreign languages in general and English language in particular is witnessing increasing attention to the notion of conceptual competence or conceptual fluency, it is important to verify the extent to which the Algerian EFL secondary school textbooks still, in a way or another, integrate metaphor in teaching and learning of English. Thus, this study aims at checking if the textbook writers take into consideration the issue of metaphor in order to develop EFL teachers' and learners' awareness of developing a metaphorical competence. To this extent, this study attempts to clarify the following question: To what extent are metaphors prevalent in the Algerian EFL secondary school textbooks to enhance learners' cognitive skills and language proficiency?

1. Literature Review:

1.1. Classical View of Metaphor

One of the most important questions that rhetoricians and different scholars of linguistics, philosophy, and psychology have sought to answer is 'what is a metaphor'. The answers, of course, are many and varied ranging from the *Rhetoric and Poetics* of Aristotle (384 – 322 BCE), to *Metaphors We Live By* by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Aristotle's (1995) definition of metaphor is: "A metaphor is the application of a word that belongs to another thing: either from genus to species, species to genus, species to species, or by analogy" (p.105). Merging deeply into this definition. *First,* metaphor is viewed as a matter of words rather than sentences, as the metaphoric transfer takes place at the level of words. Second, metaphor is described as the transference of

a term's meaning from one term to a different term. In Aristotle's (1995) definition, there are four kinds of metaphorical transfer; the transference being either from genus to species or from species to genus or from species to species or on grounds of analogy, and each metaphoric transfer is made through underlying resemblances between the two *things*. Third, metaphor is based on similarities or analogies between two things (as cited in Gibbs, 1994).

Etymologically speaking, the word metaphor consists of two Latin roots: 'meta' which means over, and 'pherein' (to carry); thus, metaphor literally means 'to carry over' (Lawrence, 1972). Along with Lawrence, Dickins, Hervey, and Higgins (2002) asserted that " Metaphor can be defined as a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is used in a non-basic sense, this non-basic sense suggesting a likeness or analogy with another more basic sense of the same word or phrase" (p.147). It is worthy to mention that figure of speech is often referred to as part of a figure of speech or tropes covering (metonymy, hyperbole, simile, irony, onomatopoeia, personification, etc) not the figure of speech itself. From the traditional view of metaphor, the rhetorician I. A. *Richards (1936)* bifurcated metaphor into *two parts*, ' *tenor* ' and ' *vehicle*', and a third part mentioned by Stockwell (2002) 'ground', which refers to the common properties between the two elements 'commonness' (p.106). According to Richards (1936), the tenor is the subject to which attributes are being represented in a metaphor, whereas the vehicle is the object whose attributes are borrowed or what is representing the tenor. By reviewing the above different definitions of a metaphor, it can be observed that these definitions are based on some of the common features of metaphor: similarity between two objects, or an implicit comparison, or a process of transferring. Also, metaphors are understood as a literal language, linguistic figure of speech, and an ornament that *compares between two things. Moreover, metaphors* can be used to refer to an expression, an idea, or an entity.

1.2. Contemporary View of Metaphor

To start with, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that the classic definition of metaphor misses the fact that metaphor is linked to thought and action besides language. In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) proposed the Conceptual Theory of Metaphor (CTM) which asserted that "Metaphor is *pervasive in everyday* life, not just in language but in *thought* and action" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.3).

Again, they add that metaphor in the modern view is seen as an important mode of thinking and understanding of things. In the main, they define metaphor as follows: "The essence of metaphor is seen as understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p.05). Simply put, it refers to conceptualising elusive or abstract concept into a concrete one or a mapping from a source domain to a target domain (Lakoff, 1993, p.21). An example of metaphor is understanding and experiencing argument in terms of war. Undeniably, argument and war are different kinds of things, but Lakoff used the metaphor 'ARGUMENT IS WAR' saying that it is used on a daily basis in different ways: 'attack, defence, counterattack, strategy, etc.', which all reflect the sense of war (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Accordingly, it is then important to emphasize that metaphor in the cognitive-linguistic view is not just a matter of language, but of the way we think and the way we act. To illustrate this point, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) used the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, exemplified by expressions such as:

"I've never won an argument with him"

"He shot down all of my arguments" (p.4)

From these utterances, it is imminent that the concept of ARGUMENT is restructured as a WAR which involves entities such as point or target or strategy and actions such as attack or shooting or demolish. In Cognitive Linguistics, metaphors are now understood as a matter of thought and human cognition, where in there is a link between two conceptual domains, i.e. the source domain and target domain. The latter relates to the abstract concept to be understood, while the former is a more concrete or physical concept and it relates to the mapping process that occurs in the brain to understand that concept (Lakoff, 1993, p. 1). In short, according to this view, it goes without saying that metaphor is a human conceptual system rather than a matter of language. On this basis, integrating metaphor in the EFL context may develop the learners' conceptual and cognitive skills.

1.3. The Role of Metaphor Teaching and Learning in the EFL Classroom

There may be consensus among researchers that metaphors play a significant aesthetical, ornamental and pedagogical role in foreign language teaching and learning and they believe that the findings of their

research may have pedagogical implications for foreign language teaching and learning. For example, Low (1988) embarked on the notion that metaphor should occupy a more important place in language teaching, as it is central to the use of language, and from a structural point of view it pervades large parts of the language system. Again, Littlemore and Low (2006) asserted that "metaphor is involved in any area that language learners need to use, understand or learn..." (p.64). In that vein, teaching and learning metaphor in EFL classes can be very advantageous from different perspectives. The central role that has to be emphasized is its contribution to the betterment of communication. In the main, "in the process of learning, metaphor works as a tool of communication and thought, providing learners with a gateway to knowledge" (Cameron and Low, 2004, p.365). According to this view, it is an indisputable fact that metaphor is an act of sharing and has an impact on the success of communication. To enable EFL learners to become successful communicators of English and to interact in an appropriate environment, EFL teachers should essentially include the use of metaphor as a teaching resource to help language learners to keep away from breakdowns in intercultural communication. In regard to vocabulary learning, metaphor has been shown to play an important role in vocabulary acquisition. Many empirical studies (Beréndi 2005; Boers 1997, 2000a, 2000b; Boers and Demecheleer 1997, Csábi 2004; Littlemore 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c) supported this claim (As cited in *Gutiérrez, 2018).* Therefore, it goes without saying that teaching metaphor expands the linguistic background of the learner by offering a great amount of vocabulary items. By the same token, Lazar (1996) stated that figurative language and metaphor in particular are often neglected in the teaching of vocabulary and could be better employed so students retain more words.

Also, he suggested some activities designed to help students develop strategies for comprehending and generating metaphor. In this regard, it is equally important to note that learners need to go beyond the literal language to understand the context properly and more deeply. From another angle, metaphor is seen as "a channelling device to comprehend, store, and reproduce figurative language input" (Boers, 2004, p. 217). Furthermore, metaphors allow learners to engage with the text more critically. In Tsirkunova's study (2013), metaphor is a useful technique that can be employed to facilitate critical thinking skills. In

another study, Velasco-Sacristán (2009) suggested that metaphor can enhance translation competence, learner autonomy, interactive learning, and critical thinking. An important study which is conducted by the Algerian researcher Sellam (2016) revealed that learning conceptual metaphor boosts students' conceptual thinking. Furthermore, in a recent study by Nguyen (2019), metaphor has a good effect on writing skill. More to the point, teaching metaphor can be seen as an engine for developing literariness. Yet, understanding metaphor requires syntactical, lexical, grammatical, and metaphoric competence to make sense of metaphors and, therefore, access a deeper understanding of the text.

2.   *Research Methodology*

In conducting this research, the researchers applied a descriptive quantitative method. It is considered appropriate to be used in the present study since the data of this study are all phrases, sentences and expressions that indicate and have the element of metaphor. Such a method of analysis is supported by Walliman (2011) who claimed that the descriptive type of research is designed to deal specifically with complex issues. It aims to move beyond 'just getting the facts' in order to make sense of the myriad other elements involved, such as human, political, social, cultural, and contextual (p.8). To collect data, the researchers used the documentation technique to look for whether or not the Algerian syllabus-designer has integrated, fully or partially, metaphor in the Algerian EFL settings. The material tackled in this study is the official EFL textbooks for the Algerian secondary education designed by many authors. The first textbook is entitled: At the Crossroads Secondary School Year One, which is written by Algerian authors. The textbook consists of five didactic units, and each unit focuses on a particular topic suggested by the syllabus designers. The units' titles are: "Getting through", "Once upon a time", "Our findings Show", "Eureka", and "Back to nature". Each unit encompasses four sequences and includes the following sections:

- Sequence One: Listening and Speaking
- Sequence Two: Reading and Writing
- Sequence Three: Developing Skills
- Sequence Four: Consolidation and Extension At the Crossroads (2008).

Secondly, *Getting through Secondary Year Two* consists of eight didactic units. The units' titles are as follows: 'Signs of the Time', 'Make Peace', 'Waste not, Want not', 'Budding Scientist', 'News and Tales', 'No Man is an Island', 'Science or Fiction', and 'Business is Business'. Each unit comprises five main parts, which are entitled and described by the authors of the book as follows:

- Discovering the language
- Developing skills
- Putting things together
- Where do we go from here?
- Exploring matters further Getting Through (2006).

Finally, *New Prospects Secondary Year Three* consists of six units. The units' titles are as follows: 'Exploring the Past', 'Ill-Gotten Gains never Prosper', 'Schools: Different and Alike', 'Safety First', 'It Is a Giant Leap for Mankind', and 'Keep Cool. Each unit is made up of six sequences and includes the following sections:

- Sequence One: Listen and Consider
- Sequence Two: Read and Consider
- Sequence Three: Research and Report
- Sequence Four: Listening and Speaking
- Sequence Five: Reading and Writing
- Sequence Six: Project Outcome New Prospects (2007)

After finding out the metaphorical expressions used in the textbooks, the researchers then examined the metaphors and described their implied meanings.

2.1. Findings

After analyzing the textbook, the total numbers of occurrences of metaphors in the textbook were nine. Table 1 encapsulates the occurrences of metaphors used in the textbooks.

Table 1: Occurrences of metaphors used in the textbooks

Level	Metaphorical Expressions
First Year	'Amalinze the Cat' 'Coketown was a town of red brick; it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of savage'. 'It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves forever and ever, and never got uncoiled.'
Second Year	'In the memory of the great leader who was able to combat racism and hatred with non-violence and love'. 'Let freedom ring'.'While Little Red Riding Hood was picking flowers'. 'A big wolf waited in a dark forest.....asked the wolf'.
Third Year	He states: "I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the/ flow of human blood in human veins". 'The heart that fed'.

A surprising result from the research is that among nineteen units that construct the whole textbooks, only nine metaphorical expressions are used in the textbooks.

2.2. Analysis of Metaphors and Their Rhetorical Value in the Textbook

This part analyses the extracted metaphors from the official EFL textbooks for the Algerian secondary education to allow us approach the metaphor at a deeper level.

2.2.1. At the Crossroads Secondary School Year One

In 'Once Upon a Time', specifically meant for the literary stream, contained two reading passages: Charles Dickens, 'Describing Coketown' and Chinua Achebe, "Describing Okonkwo", which are the only two passages containing metaphorical expressions. It is important to stress that this unit is the sole one where literature is given stress as a tool for language teaching and learning.

*- "Amalinze the Cat"

In this metaphor, Amalinze is compared to a cat, using well-known attributes from the latter to describe the former. We may see then: 'Amalinze' is the tenor and the 'cat' is the vehicle. In this case, there is

a common property between the subject 'Amalinze' and the object 'cat' which is, in fact, absent from the surface meaning that implies wrestling prowess, braveness, and fierceness. It is worth accentuating that the cat is widely used metaphorically in many languages to convey specific meanings or ideas related to human characteristics and behaviours, depending on the social and cultural environment that the language users live in, of course. Indeed, metaphors are now understood as a matter of thought and human cognition, where a link between two conceptual domains, i.e. the source domain and target domain is ubiquitous (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Through this metaphor, the word 'Amalinze' represents the target domain and the word 'cat' represents the source domain. In the same vein, Fromkin, Robert, and Nina (2003) ensured that "if metaphors are interpreted literally, they may appear anomalous. Therefore, it's necessary for the readers to encipher such expressions and grasp the intended meaning in which the metaphorical expression is uttered" (p. 204).

*- "Coketown was a town of red brick; it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of savage".

In this metaphorical statement, Dickens in this metaphorical statement describes the industrial town of Coketown as an unnatural and monotonous town. The tenor is the town of Coketown and the vehicle is the colour of red and black, while the shared ground is that red colour may connote anger, danger, and blood on the one hand. On the other hand, the black colour may reflect the smoke and ashes of factories and chimneys in the sky of Coketown.

*- "It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves forever and ever, and never got uncoiled."

In this example, Dickens compared the way smoke from factory chimneys appears in the sky as a wild animal like a huge snake floating in the air and coiling above the ground killing both humans and animals. Here, he succeeded in adding another image to convey the idea that Coketown is inhabited by savage people on the one hand, and to conjure the image of fear and loathing on the other hand. It is then important to say that Dickens seems to have triumphed to dramatize life in the Victorian Age where the atmosphere became ugly and poisonous due to the Industrial Revolution. In the very fact, metaphors are often used by novelists to provide the readers with mental pictures and images of what

they intend to portray. Also, they add colour to language, hence making it attractive to the mind's eye and provoking the conceptual system of the readers.

2.2.2. Getting Through Secondary Year Two
*- 'In the memory of the great leader who was able to combat racism and hatred with non-violence and love'.

Racism and Love are unfamiliar topics to all people. In this political speech, Martin Luther King Jr. used the WAR metaphor to motivate the African American take action against racism and to recognize the threat that hatred posed in their life. Also, Martin Luther King Jr. explicitly compared his efforts to fight racism to a war. This kind of metaphor requires going beyond comparison to cognition.

*- 'Let freedom ring'.

Martin Luther King Jr. compared freedom to a pealing bell. He wanted to reach the goal of freedom all over America.

*- 'While Little Red Riding Hood was picking flowers'.
*-'A big wolf waited in a dark forest.....asked the wolf'.

In short, the wolf acted and behaved as any human being who picked up flowers, waited, and asked.

2.2.3. New Prospects Secondary Year Three
*- He states: "I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the/ flow of human blood in human veins".

In this expression, Langston Hughes compares rivers to human blood. This metaphor symbolises the flow of human civilization from ancient times. To enforce the effectiveness of this metaphor, the text receiver can discern the meaning from the expression (flow of blood in human veins) entailing that rivers and the world are older than human beings. Also, human veins resemble the *flowing* of *water in* a *river.*

*-' The heart that fed'.

In this metaphor, the heart of the king (Ozymandias's heart) did not literally feed upon his people, but it rather metaphorically denotes sedulity and diligence. It is worthy to mention that 'the heart that fed' is another type of rhetorical device known as synecdoche, in which the poet used the term 'heart' as a presentation of the king who owned the heart and who metaphorically did the 'feed'.

3. Discussion

The textbook is among the most significant components of the EFL context. Thus, it is expected to develop the literariness of the learners, by feeding them with the basis of English literature, developing linguistic skills, a deeper understanding of other cultures, and hopefully also honing learners' reading skills. This paper, therefore, aims at investigating the use of metaphor in the Algerian EFL secondary school textbooks. Based on the results, it can be noticed that the EFL textbooks analysis has shown that metaphorical expressions barely exist in the textbooks. Among nineteen units that form the whole books, the total number of occurrences of metaphors in the textbooks is only nine. At any rate, this could be due to the fact that metaphor does not suit the age of the learners and it is beyond their proficiency level. In addition, the use of metaphors complicated the matter. So far, although metaphors do not necessarily prevent the general comprehension of a text, it has been proved that these instruments stand as an essential tool to develop building the learners' cognitive and critical thinking. More to the point, metaphor is a picture in words; it helps us understand better how things are expressed in language and in every day. Yet, understanding metaphor demands language proficiency, metaphoric competence, metaphoric awareness, and a solid familiarity with the culture.

Conclusion

The Algerian EFL secondary school textbooks are analysed to look for whether or not the Algerian syllabus-designer has integrated, fully or partially, metaphor in teaching and learning of English in the Algerian EFL classes. The analysis shows that metaphor is marginally found in the textbooks which are composed of nineteen units; only five units do give an account to metaphor use. These results imply that Algerian syllabus-designers, unlike in many other EFL settings, do not have any metaphoric awareness to the consideration of metaphor in English education and they have not yet recognised the importance of literature in teaching in general and figurative language in particular. Therefore, the integration of metaphor in the curriculum has been heralded aloft. In the main, syllabus-designers had better incorporate more reading passages that have a variety of figures of speech in the textbooks so that students are introduced to a variety of literary genres. Last but not least,

they would feel much harnessed to the development of learners' conceptual and cognitive skills.

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