LEXICALLY-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING: METAPHOR FOR ENHANCING LEARNING

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Abstract

Although metaphor has been ignored, lexically-based language teaching considers metaphor as an important aspect to learn. Learning metaphor helps learners improve their general proficiency in SLA because metaphor is a key to human memory organization, so that it enhances the acquisition of vocabulary, improves comprehension, clarifies ideas, extends thought, and increases attention. As long as meaning is the center of second language learning, metaphorical meaning must also be included because metaphor is pervasive in every day language and thought. Raising students' awareness towards metaphor helps develop their metaphorical competence, which is a requirement for native-like proficiency. The importance of metaphor in lexically-based language teaching lends support from, cognitive linguistics the theory of mental lexicon, cognitive linguistics, second language acquisition, and the abundant use of metaphor in daily use.

Keywords: lexically-based language teaching, metaphor

INTRODUCTION

Metaphor has been overlooked and given less attention than it deserves in second language teaching. Applied linguistics textbooks and almost all TESOL textbooks do not include the importance and the idea of how to teach metaphor. For most people metaphor is thought to be too difficult and useless to teach, and is considered to be able to take care of itself. Metaphor is indeed a difficult factor in second language acquisition (Singleton, 1999). Sale (1981) states that in writing classes in the University of Washington, students only thought that metaphor was mainly literary, especially for achieving an ornamental effect in poetry but not really necessary for any decent, hard working plain style. It was only thought as a matter of words or language, instead of thought or action. Lexically-based language teaching, however, considers metaphor as an important aspect in

language to learn by students, especially because it is a lexical phenomenon which is pervasive in everyday language and thought.

Lexically-based language teaching believes in how to facilitate learning rather than in how to teach. It has its own approach, methodology and syllabus. It puts an emphasis on the importance of raising students' awareness on the acquisition and use of lexicon, including metaphor. One simple way of raising the students' metaphoric awareness is to draw their attention to the metaphors in the texts they encounter, as metaphors cannot be ignored as if they did not exist. Another important step in raising learners' awareness is to make them aware of the source domain or the origin of unfamiliar figurative expressions they encounter.

WHY METAPHOR
IN LEXICALLY-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING

Lexically-based language teaching considers the importance of metaphor in language teaching. This consideration is based on the theory of mental lexicon, cognitive linguistics, second language acquisition, and the abundant use of metaphor in daily.

Theory of Mental Lexicon

Mental lexicon contains equipment which enables people to extend meaning, that is to expand and to coin new words. This meaning extention is usually metaphorical. This is the reason why metaphors are continually and innovatively created. A great deal of language is motivated by metaphor. Lexically-based language teaching helps learners to be aware of this metaphorical word extention in daily use.

Lexically-based language teaching believes that language is basically words, as words are the basic building blocks of language. As far as words are concerned, meaning becomes the center of discussion. Lexical meaning includes metaphorical meaning. For example, when we overhear a word in the memory, the word does not only trigger its basic meaning, but it also triggers a whole situation associated to the speaker's/listener's knowledge of the word. Human mind processes an association between a word with a stack of mental models, stereotypical situations or remembered frameworks. Learning a second language must also learn these associations (Aitchison, 1994).

Introducing metaphor in lexically-based language teaching is for raising students' awareness to metaphor. In this case, mental lexicon becomes an important tenet because second language acquisition is a mental phenomena which largely involves memory activation. Kweldju (2004) puts

forward the view that lexically-based language teaching must be developed to meet how human mind stores, recognizes and retrieves words, and must optimize human cognitive processing. Awareness is important for conscious learning, which ties together such related concepts as attention, short-term memory, control and series processing (Schmidt, 1990).

In fact, metaphoric capacity starts very early in a child's lexical development, when he acquires his first words. For instance, a child first used the word *open* for opening a door, a jar, his drinking bottle, his bag, and eventually he could also metaphorically extend it to "*opening his heart.*"

An experiment shows that syntax is also lexically-represented (Bower *et al.*, 1999). In spite of this, however, language is not merely lists of words or lexical glosses, but lexical phenomena. One phenomenon is metaphorical patterning, while the others include the phonological, orthographic and semantic domains of words, colligation, and collocation. In fact, the semantic domain of a word also covers both the denotative and connotative meaning, which are both frequently metaphoric (MacLennan, 1994).

Metaphor plays an important role in the way humans represent events, cognitive growth, concept development, and intellectual development. Human conceptual system is actually metaphorically-structured (Charteris-Black, 2000; Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1987). It has also been discovered that enhanced metaphoric awareness contributes to the retention of figurative expressions in a second language (Boers, 2000) and overall communicative language ability (Littlemore, 2001).

Cognitive Linguistics

In spite of its abundance, metaphor has long been ignored and excluded from linguistic investigation for its impreciseness. It is considered imprecise because the literal meaning of metaphor is usually complete nonsense. In its conventional view metaphor was only figure of speech and was associated with poetic and rhetorical device in the literary world. Until the 90s Chomskyan approach on linguistics is still universalistic for defining the phenomenon 'language', mentalistic for deep-rooted regularities, and algorithmic for seeking a system of rules. Based on these principles, metaphor was obviously considered to be idiosyncratic, hardly semantic in any obvious sense, and violated selection restrictions.

Recently this view has been challenged by cognitive linguists (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Langacker, 1987). Cognitive linguists' view is fundamentally against the generative tradition and rejects many of its underlying assumptions. They claim that meaning, including metaphorical

meaning, is a cognitive phenomenon and must be analyzed as such. Metaphor is not just a feature of language, but the very vehicle of formal thought and action. Metaphors are the result of experience and are, therefore, basic, natural features of thought and action. They certainly have some psychological value and discourse goals to achieve. In fact, human ordinary conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.

They offer a fresh perspective and innovative approach to resolve the traditional linguistic inability to explain figurative language (Langacker, 1987). Meaning is not understood based on formal logic. This reorientation is based on the linguistic analysis that operates at the level of conceptual foundation, when vocabulary and grammar are unified.

Cognitive linguistics investigates conceptual metaphors from the basis of human thought (Deignan *et al.*, 1997; Lakoff, 1987). It also seeks a psychologically realistic account of language structure that relates it directly to cognitive processing, and equates semantic structure with conceptual structure. Cognitive grammar reflects a growing intellectual trends in the analysis of language and mind, and meaning is equated with conceptualization. Learning a second language will become easier when the process of learning is in line with the general principles that govern all aspects of language. According to cognitive linguistics, metaphor is a significant part of people's everyday conceptual systems. It is common and universal because basically it is a structure that underlies human cognitive map. Therefore, metaphoric competence is part of the overall communicative competence. To develop metaphoric competence learners need to be aware of the two levels of metaphor: linguistic and conceptual.

Linguistic metaphor is particular metaphors in language, while conceptual metaphor is particular metaphors in thought. Conceptual metaphor is used to refer to a connection between two semantic areas at the level of thought such as the relationship between *anger* and *fire,* in *Anger is fire,* while the linguistic metaphor is the spoken or written realizations of a conceptual metaphor such as *I grew hot under the colour*, and *She's got a fiery temper*.

Metaphoric meanings, as a matter of fact, are already established and integral to the fabric of the language. Novel or creative metaphors are further extension of the established ones (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). Recognizing and understanding metaphoric patterns would provide learners with a basis for reasoning and enable them to identify the important systemic metaphors encoded by certain verb types which use the same prepositions. Learners should not be protected from the difficulties inherent in metaphor and other non-literal language.

For example, learners need to know how to cope with metaphoric structures (Lakoff, 1989; Reddy, 1979) such as More is up, less is down;

Happy is up, unhappy is down (cheer up) ; Time is path (look ahead and leave the past behind you). Knowing this helps learners improve their general linguistic skill. This is because semantically-based learning is more effective and stable than the superficial phonologically-based learning.

To acquire metaphor needs a special learning because sometimes it is not always clear and precise. Although metaphor is a feature of all natural languages, there are differences in conceptual and linguistic metaphors that exist between different languages. Further, learning metaphor itself helps learners to improve their general proficiency in second language acquisition. This is because metaphor is one characteristic of a learner's innate cognitive drive. This paper addresses the issue of exploiting metaphor in second language acquisition.

Metaphor in Second Language Acquisition

Metaphor plays an important role in language acquisition. Second language learners need to develop their awareness of metaphor and metaphoric competence. The ability to acquire, produce and interpret metaphor in the second language is crucial for language learning, especially because words often have substantially more metaphoric than denotative meanings (Littlemore, 2001). Acquiring common metaphorical patterns can simplify the acquisition of vocabulary, which is basic for the acquisition of a second language, and native-like proficiency. In fact, the absence of metaphor in students' production is also a mark of non-native-like speech (Danesi, 1994).

Metaphorical transfer has played an important role in the child's acquisition of language (Lyons, 1977). It allows children and learners to convert sense of impressions into a set of abstract symbols by finding similarities and differences among phenomena in the world around us. The product of continuous comparison is the development of patterns, without which the learner's brain is overloaded with a mass of sensory data. Detecting similarities at every level of abstraction is the key to human memory organization (Charteris-Black, 2000).

Metaphors should be used in pedagogy because it can facilitate learning through compactness, vividness and inexpressibility. Compactness involves the transfer of the well-known to less-well-known domain. Vividness allows a more memorable learning experience due to the greater imagery of association. Inexpressibility deals with how metaphor works by encoding certain aspects of our experience which it would not otherwise be possible to encode. Therefore, through metaphor, complex and new concepts can be embodied in very common words, which people know very

well. Enhanced metaphoric awareness will also help learners retain these figurative expressions (Boers, 2000; Charteris-Black, 2000) such as:

1. The earth is *a giant blue and white marble*, and the moon is *giant Swiss cheese.*
2. Shadows are formed because light *travels* in straight lines. When light shines on an object, some rays of light are *blocked* by the object while other rays continue to *travel* in straight lines.
3. The main *transport* system in the human body is called the *circulatory* system.
4. The heart is a *pump* which *pushes* blood around the body.
5. The metaphor of *scaffolding* is Vygotskian descriptions of learning to explain how learning occurs as a result of the inter-psychological support to lead learners to internalize what is being learned.

Metaphor helps learners maximize their memory in language learning. In fact, words and information in human mind or in the mental dictionary are selected, retrieved, stored and linked together in a gigantic multi-dimensional cobweb, or interconnected system. They are not really stored independently, but linked together according to a number of connections: **contrast,** such as happy and sad; **co-ordination,** such as salt and pepper, roses and daisies; **collocation** such as computer software, true colour; **superordination,** such as vehicle and car; and **similars,** such as happy and glad; **case relations,** such as artist and paint (Aitchison, 1994). **Figurative or metaphorical association**-such as *stubborn* and *mule*, *slow* and *snail*-is one kind of similar, specifically the attribute similar. In this figurative process a learner uses his past experience in memory to derive abstraction and to constitute the empirical word.

The Abundance of Metaphor in Daily Language Use

Metaphor is a dominant and widespread feature of natural language because it adds interest to a text (Roberts & Kreuz, 1994) and it ranges from the conventional to the original one. It is estimated that there are, on average, over five examples of metaphor per 100 words spoken, almost a third of which are novel uses (Pollio *et al*., 1977).

Metaphors always grow in number because human cognitive system always makes associations, and this includes the process of extending the meaning of lexicon to facilitate the creation of new concepts. Metaphors are constantly transformed from figurative to literal parts of ordinary language.

The abundant occurrence of metaphor has been widely recognized in informative texts such as daily newspapers. In fact, it was also presumed that only authors, journalists, and newscasters for media of information strived to create interesting new metaphors. It is found that 1,131 types of metaphor can be collected only from 2 issues of *The Jakarta Post* July 21-

22, 2004. On average 28 types of metaphor are found on each page. The 63 types in 50 sentences/phrases are quoted as follows:

Table 1: Metaphors collected from *The Jakarta Post* 21-22, 2004

1	Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin *shuffled* his cabinet on Tuesday *to fill the holes* left by June 28 election, when unhappy voters *kicked out* six ministers.
2	It *scrapped* presidential authority to approve deployment for other purposes.
3	He is not *a puppet dictator*.
3	The TNI has three *key r*oles in maintaining state sovereignty.
4	Navy ships from Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia began a coordinated patrol aimed at *stamping out* piracy in the Straits of Malacca.
5	Many people are easily *trapped* by their own greed.
6	Russell Crowe returns to *his roots*. (Australian film world)
7	The man (British MP) who utterly *shook up* his own party before winning a pair of *landslide* elections
8	Blair easily *saw off* other challengers.
9	Jakarta's monorail project moving at *snail's pace*
10	The trade lag with China meant Indonesia *was being eclipsed* by other countries in the region.
11	Regional economy which provides greater authority to regions in managing their economic affairs, remained *a stumbling block* to reviving the country's *faltering* investment.
12	His arrest on abuse of power and sodomy charges *sparked* street protests and calls for *political reform.*
13	*Power shortage hell* in *China's heaven*
14	The city of Hangchou known along with nearby Suzhou as *heaven on earth*
15	A *ballooning middle-class* is placing unprecedented demands on power.
16	Obesity has become *a big headache* for many families who are allowed only one child.
17	Pledged to narrow *the yawning gap* between the rich and the poor
18	Poverty alleviation has been *a battle* in the new century.
19	It must detain him and *freeze his* assets without hesitation.
20	Before the *collapse* of the Houston energy company
21	LG Caltex oil called on Monday for police *to break a strike* after workers occupied several of its facilities.
22	We have asked for the police to stop workers from *crippling operations* at the plant.
23	A key *raw material* used for petrochemical products
24	Malaysia is in turn likely to urge Japan *to lift trade barriers* on farm products imports.
25	Including *tech giant*
26	*Indian giant eyes* Maspion stake (interested in)
27	The long history of Indonesians migrating to work in Malaysia is partly a product of the *porous borders.*
28	As the nation proceeds on its *bumpy road* to democracy
29	The workers should *shoulder the blame* for ignoring information on how to apply for

	work in Malaysia.
30	They are gullible to know-it-all *middlemen* who tell them that the proper procedures are complex and costly.
31	Being preyed on by *human trafficking networks*
32	*Chronic poverty* among members of the Kubu tribe has changed their habits.
33	Australia is trying *to kill a bug with a canon.*
34	This was the reason why former general, Wiranto, *jockeyed Golkar* and *embraced Solahuddin Wahid.*
35	Only now has he realized that he was *riding on a naughty horse.*
36	Loyalty to political organization has *actually died* in Indonesia.
37	Because Indonesian voters' support is highly *fragile and mobile* due to the lack of a *credible reservoir*
38	Indonesia is at the *crossroads* between becoming a democratic and prosperous country like Korea or Taiwan or going the way of the Philippines, where presidential elections are more often than not little more than *beauty contests*.
39	The natural development of the political parties has been threatened by his *meteoric rise* in popularity.
40	The *deficit orgy* of the Reagan era is looking less like a freak political accident.
41	New Pakistan PM vows to *pursue* peace with rival India . . . *at the heart of* hostility between the *nuclear armed* South Asian neighbors.
42	…we have *embarked upon* a meaningful effort to resolve all differences and disputes with India.
43	…peace with India was *key* to *unlocking* the region's economic potential.
44	Atal Behari Vajpayee is the main *architect* of a peace process aimed at ….
45	Vietnam *lashes out* at U.S. human rights bill.
46	The House approved a similar bill in 2001, but it *died* in the Senate after 2004 ….
47	…, which was one of the *main engines* of *economic growth*
48	East Timor police *fired tear* gas on Tuesday to evict former freedom fighters …
49	Brazil prepares for *tough match* against Uruguay
50	... which has become *the backbone* of economic growth.

It is also evident that metaphor is widely used in scientific language, although scientific language is claimed to be precise, simple, concrete and familiar. It prefers the simple denotative term to the connotative one which carries emotional associations with it. Scientific language is, in fact, developed from giving new meanings to old terms. For instance, the new meanings are given to both *light* and *travel* when physicists describe *light travels in straight lines* (Kinneavy, 1980).

If students are aware of the occurrence of metaphor in scientific texts, not only do they easily expand the contextual use of their acquired vocabulary from the source domain to the target domain, but they also accelerate their understanding of the subject because metaphor plays an important role in conceptual formation. In this case, students can relate the

content of the image schemata they are familiar with to the new schemata they have to perceive, process and build.

Almost in all branches of science we use a lot of metaphors to make them easy to understand as discourse. In architecture, for example, we will find metaphors such as *reclaimed* and *shiny boxes*, and *DNA,* in "to build a new reclaimed downtown with big shiny boxes, and "you have to make an effort to identify the *DNA* of the city", respectively; in statistics we have *pie* chart; in computer science we have *mouse, software, hardware, motherboard;* in biology we find *stem cells, queen bee*; in music we know the term *a musical magpie*; in politics we have *report card*, *crusaders, clean* and *transparency* in "the president's report card," "crusaders in corruption," "the clean man in transparency international program", respectively; in environmental studies we have *greenhouse effect*, *green technology,* and *buried* in "the CO2 would be buried in aquifers"; in health we are familiar with such words as *rage*, *outbreak*, and *ring-fence* in "as SARS rages in China, "avian flu outbreaks," and "ring-fence approach for quarantining up to 1,500 close contacts of SARS victims, respectively; in sociology we find *root* in "return to his cultural root" and *snowballing* in research methodology.

METAPHOR AND METAPHORIC COMPETENCE

Metaphor refers to a representation that describes how two words or expressions from apparently different domains may be associated at an underlying cognitive level. *Fire*, for example, is used to describe a physical event, but it can be used metaphorically to describe a person. The word *fiery* is used to capture this metaphorical extension. When we call someone *fiery* we do not really mean that they are on fire, but we extend the use of *fire* to cover personal characteristics. With the equal reason, we use the words *warm* and *cold* to refer to properties of people such as *John is a warm person, but his wife is cold*.

Therefore, being aware of metaphor for developing metaphoric competence will certainly be an advantage for English language learning (Benjafield, 1992). Students will know how language internally resembles because metaphor is also one root of word formation processes, which leads to the abundance of homonymy. Most senses of most words in English are used metaphorically (Moon, 1988).

Exploiting metaphor is optimizing metaphor for facilitating English language acquisition, improving the quality, speed and amount of learning, making it casual and memorable for students, and helping students benefit from it to approximate their language to a native speaker's.

Conceptual Metaphor and Linguistic Metaphor

Conceptual metaphors capture one's thinking about the nature of ideas. *Time is money* is a conceptual metaphor, from which linguistic metaphors are derived. For examples, while we can spend our money, we also spend our time. While we waste our money, we can also waste our time.

Tabel 2: The linguistic metaphors that reflect the conceptual metaphor
Time is money

MONEY	TIME
Wasting money	Wasting time
Saving money	Saving time
Spend your money	Spend your time
I lost a lot of money	I lost a lot of time
Is that worth your money	Is that worth your time?
Run out of money	Run out of time
Short of money	Short of time
Invest your money	Invest one's time

The conceptual metaphor of *Anger is fire* is the abstractions of the ideas lying behind the common usage of such expressions as the following:
   6. He raised his eyes and looked at him with the same *smoldering* glance as before
   7. His full and dark eyes *burned* with *fire*
   8. It *inflamed* him and his anger mounted
   9. Quarrels *heated* people.

Another conceptual metaphor is *Happiness is up* and *Sadness is down*. A number of linguistic metaphors center around it such as:
   10. My heart *sank.*
   11. His spirit *soared.*

The daily linguistic metaphors (12)-(18) below reflect the conceptual metaphor *Happiness is brightness*, such as
   12. His face *lit up.*
   13. Her face became absolutely *radiant*
   14. He *sparked* and *shone.*
   15. The proprietor nodded and *beamed.*
   16. His face *shone* with interior smiles
   17. She smiled *brightly.*
   18. She smiled a *radiant* smile.

Due to the pervasinevess of metaphor, Low (1988) argues that students need to develop metaphor competence, awareness of metaphor, and strategies for comprehending and creating metaphors. Metaphoric

competence covers a speaker's ability to the originality of metaphor production, fluency of metaphor interpretation, ability to find meaning in metaphor, and speed in finding meaning in metaphor. These meanings or images are deeply rooted in the culture of a given society or speech community.

Referring to L2 learners in particular, Danesi (1986) claims that the true sign that the learner has developed communicative proficiency is the ability to metaphorize in the target language. Low (1988) also argues that the ability to produce and comprehend metaphor is essential in L2 learning as metaphor can be used to aid comprehension, extend thought, shed new light into old issues, compel attention and clarify ideas. The use of metaphor also enables language learners to express their creativity and originality of thought (Gardner *et al.*, 1974) and opens up new areas of conversation (Dirven, 1985).

The ability to acquire, produce, and interpret metaphors in the target language is important for language learning because words often have substantially more connotative (metaphoric) meanings than denotative meanings, and that these connotative meanings are often in frequent usage (Littlemore, 2001). For example, the word *key* not only refers to a device to open or to close a lock, but it also refers to a device for winding a clock, a particular musical note based on which other notes are related to, a set of answers for exercises or problems, and a thing that provides an access for something else such as *seriousness is a key to success*.

CONCLUSION

Although metaphor has been ignored, lexically-based language teaching considers it as an important aspect to learn, especially because it is a lexical phenomenon and is pervasive in everyday language and thought. Metaphor, however, is not only literary, but also conceptual. It can be exploited to activate and organize students' conceptual association to allow vocabulary learning more memorable. Being sensitive to metaphor, students can easily extend the range of contextual use for their already acquired vocabulary.

Language is basically words as words are the basic building blocks of language. Even syntax is lexically-represented in the mental lexicon. Therefore, as far as words are concerned, meaning becomes the center of discussion. Lexical meaning includes metaphorical meaning, and metaphoric competence is a requirement for native-like proficiency.

There are theoretical and practical accounts that support the importance of metaphor in language teaching. They are the theory of mental lexicon, cognitive linguistics, second language acquisition, and the abundant

use of metaphor in daily use. Metaphor needs to be learned because it is not always clear and precise, and can be different among different languages.

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