

Metaphor and Effective Language Learning

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Abstract

The writer digests that learning foreign language is a hard effort without considering the mind participation. Text of Metaphor is something that fits right to the process of first language acquisition which makes use mind power and sometime emotionally involved. Metaphor is not only linguistic but also conceptual phenomenon. Word in language is valuable thing and dynamic which is culturally rich of meaning. When People say to their children about life “life is ocean”, it implies the work of mind, emotion, experience about culture and the sense of aesthetic.

So, metaphor is something possible for any reason, particularly for learning foreign language. Metaphor can be a bridge to facilitate the abstract concept by the more concrete concept. Metaphor in literature is such embedded feature which makes sense every single word. In short, Metaphor cultivates language as the most valuable tools in conveying ideas. Moreover, understanding theory of metaphor is the fundamental aspect to lead understanding of language learning.

In conclusion, metaphor in English language teaching gives opportunity for learners to optimize their strength. Metaphor is effective for learning language. Metaphor also makes learners focus on the form of language. Furthermore, metaphor helps learners to handle linguistic creativity.

Key words: metaphor, literature and language learning

Introduction

Learning foreign language is sometime questioned. Due to the implication toward people life, foreign language plays an important role, particularly when people communicate with their environment to improve their life. In fact, English text is one of the important environments for students to support their study. Teachers, lecturers and researchers have formulated methods and strategy to help students learning English as a foreign language.

English (as a foreign language) is language which conceptually has similar characteristic from other languages. In the context of language acquisition, language is the result of interaction between the initial state and the course of experiences factor (Chomsky, 2000:4). The both aspects are part of human development that are impressive and fascinating.

In the development of foreign language learning, metaphor has given new atmosphere and perspective. In literature, understanding metaphor represents understanding on how people think, how they make sense of the world, and how they communicate each other. It is naturally in line with the language acquisition process. English as a foreign language philosophically should be treated equally as other languages (mother tongue). People first language is acquired by responding the phenomenon or context in which the languages are formed.

Based on above point of view, metaphor and figurative language become part of a big question about the relationship language and processes of mind. In language teaching, it's common for teacher to explain the use of grammatical structure in English. Traditionally, teacher emphasizes on linguistic rule and sometimes ignores the social context of the language. This paper will try to elaborate clearly about language teaching by the example of systemic functional linguistics (SFL). The basic concept of SFL is trying to formulate particular use of language through particular meaning in a given social context. Consequently, it required a sense of linguistic form as a response to the type of meaning we want to communicate.

Discussion

The meaning of Metaphor

Metaphor is simply defined as understanding one form by another form. When someone says “my mother is my sun”, we recognize that mother’s character as an important people. This metaphor indicates that “mother” is powerful woman who plays an important role for her children. Conceptually the word “Sun” is an extensively used to think about the highly abstract and concept of mother. It will be very complex to understand the word “mother”, but the Sun can facilitate the abstract concept of mother by the more concrete concept of Sun.

The two concepts above in the conceptual metaphor have special term namely source domain and target domain. The word “mother” is the target domain while the word “Sun” is source domain. The target domain is the domain that we try to understand through the use of the source domain (Kovecses, 2010:4). In short, when we talk about metaphor, we make use certain words or languages to represent the other certain meaning than what it supposed to be or what it “literally” mean.

Cameron’s (2003:3) definition is in line with above concept of metaphor. Philosophically, metaphor provides a challenge to logic by appearing to state untruth that has some truth, or to compare two things that are similar. The emphasizing is not the use of language but it seems likely about how we construct our conceptualization and the use of conceptual metaphor. In short, metaphor must be investigated in both language and mind.

The importance of metaphor

There are two principal ways of metaphor. Those ways are classified by two important relations (Knowles and Moon, 2006:3). First, in relation to individual words, metaphor is a basic process of words formation and words meaning. The concept and meaning are lexicalized or express in words through metaphor. Second, in relation to discourse, metaphor is important because of its functions—explaining, clarifying, describing, expressing, evaluating, and entertaining. There are many reasons why we use metaphors in speech or writing: not least, because there is sometimes no other word to refer to a particular thing. But where we have a choice, we choose metaphors in order to communicate what we think or how we feel about something; to explain what a particular thing is like; to convey a meaning in a more interesting or creative way; or to do all of these.

Figurative Language

Metaphor is also known as the use of attractive and unusual language. In common sense it is about what the so call figure of speech. Figures of speech are merely interesting because they reveal the thought processes that produce them. The processes revealed by figurative language allow us to conceptualize **Abstract** meaning. For the students, it will be very interesting activity. But again, teacher should find way to help students to attain a better and confident control of figurative language. Holme (2004:28) gives three reasons to do this.

First an appropriate instructional sequence or teaching method should start with the observable acts of metaphor production. The skills that are developed by recognizing the observable might then be turned to uncovering or unfolding forms that are hidden by their skill. Second, linguistic creativity is a function of successful language use. Metaphor formation, whether of real or imagined originality, reinforces such creativity. It therefore follows that students should be encouraged think deeply and broadly about. They can treat the target language less as a prefabricated environment to which they must adapt their capacity for expression and more as a resource that will respond to their expressive needs. Third, live metaphor is about finding new or hitherto unexposed meanings. To encourage metaphor’s process of meaning-creation may be to encourage students to ask what even ordinary words mean in a wider and deeper sense.

When teacher give a figurative language “time is knowledge” then students will give certain responses. One student may say “time is an important thing” or other say “time is

valuable thing”. These are the students’ mind processes that generate their understanding about time and also their linguistic creativities.

Teaching the Language and structure of Metaphor

Cameron (2003:16) and Holme (2004:59) in examination of spoken data, found that, in English, verb metaphors occur more frequently than the noun type. Holme in further discussion give the term of copula metaphor. It is common in English the copula “be” or “become” often occur in a figurative language such as “time is knowledge”, “knowledge becomes the light for life”. Copula metaphors identify the topic as a subject, and a vehicle as a complement. But the topic and vehicle can only rarely be given a grammatical identity in this way, since many metaphorical sentences do not have a topic that can be identified in the lexis (MacCormac in Holme, 2004:59).

In other context, verb metaphor also occurs as a part of speech. We can see the concept in the example below.

“The flower smiles at the coming bee”.

It is clear that the word “smiles” is not literal, because flower does not smile. In order to understand non literal meaning of “smiles” we should think of the flower as like a girl and the bee as like a boy. Although there may be a metaphorical focus on a particular part of speech, in this case a verb, there is no clear idea as to whether the metaphor begins and ends here. Thus, the following interpretation is also arguable:

Source domain (the smile of beautiful girl as she meets a handsome boy)

Target domain (the response of flower when a bee is approaching)

Metaphor also has capability to generate a narrative. This narrative also pushes the metaphor beyond the parts of speech in which it first resides. For above metaphor “the flower smile at the coming bee”, the narrative may vary. Different students will construct different narratives. The narrative can be a couple who is falling in love. After long time they do not see each other, they can finally meet. The girl is very happy for her lover coming.

Another student may also have different narrative as follow: it is about lonely girl who has been waiting for someone. After some time, a man appears and asks her to come with him and propose her to be his wife. Finally, the girl is very happy. in this case, students are engaged to be creative by make use their mind to interpret the metaphor based on their prior knowledge and experiences.

From the little elaboration above we can understand and pedagogically exploit the metaphorical basis of language by looking at forms of expression whose figurative nature is immediately apparent. If we first deal with such features and the processes through which they are formed, we can begin to understand what is at stake, then use that understanding to induct the student into the larger, hidden store of buried metaphor that lies at the core of every language.

Conclusion

Metaphor can be an alternative way to help student learning language. Teachers should make their students aware that they are not teaching language in order to satisfy the predicted social functions of their students. The classroom can address the social nature of language by studying analogous contexts, unfolding the same as a concertina of zones of potential use, then fine-tuning the language that must be used in order to account for the linguistic difference in likeness that every communicative situation requires. The pedagogical objective is knowledge of language that understands its scope for development according to the requirements that are imposed upon it.

Metaphor is the way people understanding language through their world. Metaphor pedagogically has cultural purpose as follow:

1. To make some invisible meanings visible, bringing them out of their historical obscurity in order to show why they are constructed as they are. The objective is to help the learner gain a conscious hold on such differences of construction. The learner can also secure the meanings of their first language by understanding them more clearly from the perspective of the target language (TL). At the same time they can grapple with the different meanings that the TL presents.
2. To help them fashion active double-voiced utterances. Language knowledge should not be a prison of schematized meanings, but a pathway to greater expressiveness. Metaphor affords students the means to modify inherited meanings to their own needs.
3. Language learning is cultural engagement not cultural submission. The individual who uses English as a second language with fuller understanding of its cultural meaning does not have to submit to the cultural values of the English-speaking world. They can enter into an active engagement with those meanings so as to make them serve their own cultural needs.

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