The implications of metaphorical reflection for professional awareness development of prospective EFL teachers

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Abstract

This study documents and explains the role of metaphor use in the English majors' understanding of selected English language teaching (ELT) aspects. The data, gathered from a questionnaire filled out by 25 fifth-year EFL students, was examined on a qualitative and quantitative basis alike. The respondents were asked to rank 30 metaphorical definitions of selected ELT methodology concepts in order of preference and comment on one of them. Obtained results showed the participants' eagerness to analyze proposed metaphorical definitions and connect them to their own linguistic metaphors. This, in turn, encouraged the use of related terminology and the examination of chosen concepts from different perspectives (i.e., cause-and-effect relationships, personality factors, learner needs), which apparently enhanced the respondents' knowledge about various ELT methodology-specific concepts.

Keywords: metaphor; metaphorical reflection; blueprint model; ELT methodology; source domain/target domain

1. Introduction

The publication of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) seminal work entitled *Metaphors We Live By* paved the way for research into metaphor as a fundamental tool of human cognition helping understand the functioning of language, thought and discourse.

Around two decades later the interdisciplinary interest in metaphor, comprising such disciplines as philosophy, psychology, theoretical linguistics and literature, was extended to the applied linguistic contexts connecting this concept to second or foreign language (L2) teaching and learning as well as to L2 acquisition theories, child L1 use, dictionaries or academic papers (Cameron, 1999; Ellis, 2002; Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Komorowska, 2010; Littlemore, 2004).

Being one of the most convoluted, fascinating and still not thoroughly investigated concepts nested within the interwoven domains of language and thought (Gibbs, 1999), metaphor has caught the attention of the present author who decided to investigate it from a language-in-use perspective. To be more precise, this article aims to examine how metaphor with its ontological mappings influences the university EFL students' explicit knowledge about various L2 teaching and learning processes.

2. Literature review

2.1. On the ubiquitous nature of metaphor

The most traditional and thus widely accepted though misleading definition of metaphor highlights it as a rhetorical quirk or an ornamental product of the poetic imagination that has much more in common with extraordinary than ordinary language (Deignan, 2005; Holme, 2004). This stance can be to a certain extent traced back to the works of Aristotle who underscored a decorative character and little cognitive value of metaphors which, assuming an aberrant form of discourse, exist far from everyday language use (Ortony, 1979).

A different and more comprehensive perspective was embraced in the field of cognitive linguistics by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in their groundbreaking conceptual metaphor theory (CMT), which refers to metaphor as omnipresent in everyday life and language through a broad range of expressions and actions. Going further, CMT indicates that metaphor originates at the level of thought, which implies that human conceptual processes are considerably metaphorical and that they constitute cross-domain mappings between the source domain and the target domain. The source domain comprises a variety of concrete entities, facts, phenomena and relationships, whereas the target domain involves a set of abstract and ambiguous ideas that usually escape simple definitions or categorizations (Lakoff, 1993). Consequently, metaphor aims to enable the understanding and experiencing of abstract target-domain concepts in terms of literal source-domain attributes and processes. In other words, target-domain abstract ideas are lexicalized by linguistic metaphors which are words and expressions derived from the source domain.[1] The

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[1] Different studies (e.g., Gibbs, 2011; Gibbs et al., 2004; Nayak & Gibbs, 1990) provide empirical justification for Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) assumption that the locus of metaphor

lexicalization of those ideas draws on a set of fixed conceptual correspondences (mappings) between the two domains in question (Kövecses, 2002). A famous example of conceptual metaphor provided by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) is ARGUMENT IS WAR, in which the abstract, target-domain notion of argument is shown as evoking military connotations that emerge from the literal, source-domain notion of war and that are realized via a number of interconnected linguistic metaphors (e.g., "He *attacked* every weak point in my argument."; "He *shot down* all of my arguments.") (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 4). Another interesting example proving the ubiquity of metaphor is TIME IS MONEY, which, given the metaphorical expressions it usually entails (e.g., "You're wasting my time."; "He's living on borrowed time."), reveals that the abstract category of time is reflected on and talked about in much more pragmatic, financial terms (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 4). That being said, it is worthwhile to indicate that linguistic metaphors may be effectively used to study the essence of complex abstract concepts as well as better understand the non-literal, ambiguous nature of real-world situations.

2.2. The educational dimension of metaphor

Cognitive linguists tend to emphasize that metaphors can facilitate the understanding of difficult and complex concepts by encouraging the mapping of a more concrete source-domain meaning onto a more abstract target domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Niemeier, 2000). Following the same line of reasoning, it is noteworthy that metaphor can be benefited from in education as it may influence the ways in which various difficult and ambiguous concepts are introduced, practiced and revised (Farjami, 2012; Schraw & Bruning, 1996). How metaphor can be used by teachers depends on the choice of model adopted to explain the metaphorical relationship between thought and language.

There are two models that can be helpful in explaining the conceptualization process or how language representations are related to deep-structure mental representations, namely, the *conduit model* and the *blueprint model*, illustrating the positivist and interpretivist perspectives, respectively (Kuhn, 1962, as cited in Komorowska, 2010, p. 61). The former is more traditional than the latter since it focuses on language as the vehicle by means of which meaning is conveyed unilaterally from one pole, that is, the emitter (the speaker/the teacher) to the other, that is, the receiver (the listener/the learner) and at the same time it does not take into account the complex processes of human understanding, experience and cooperation (Ponterotto, 2003). Trying to situate the conduit model

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is thought and that it pervades everyday life not only in language but mainly in mental processes and actions.

in the educational context can be, therefore, synonymous with laying emphasis on the transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the learner. As regards the blueprint model, it draws on experiential learning and as such it enables the student to construct and reconstruct his/her own understanding of events that have been initially conceptualized by the teacher (Palinscar, 1998; Tomlin et al., 1997). Thus, the teacher's input acts as a blueprint for guiding the learner's interpretation.

Of the two models characterized above, it is the blueprint model that gives teachers a promising opportunity to take advantage of the explanatory and exploratory power of metaphor in the L2 classroom. This model allows for dynamic information flow between interlocutors, the main aspects of which are knowledge integration and information management. Concerning knowledge integration, it refers to organizing the information into a coherent whole by selecting, bringing to consciousness and activating this part of it which for certain reasons seems more important than others. When it comes to the latter aspect, it relates to how the speaker or the teacher helps the listener or the learner process received information (Chafe, 1968; Tomlin et al., 1997). Consequently, the blueprint model-based use of metaphor can be a constructive, thought-provoking process, provided that the teacher identifies the kind of difficulty perceived by his/her students, presents a problematic issue through metaphor so as to encourage them to approach it from a novel perspective, and enables them to experientially operate the material putting forward and testing out their own hypotheses. Such actions are likely to make students look at old things in new ways and therefore treat them as something that, though seemingly uninteresting or unrewarding, deserves effort and engagement (Petrie & Oshlag, 1996).

As opposed to what is generally presumed, grammatical concepts are largely metaphorical (Lakoff, 1993) and so are applied linguistic concepts in general (e.g., *cognitive sponge*, *affective filter*, *scanning*, *lockstep*, *positive reinforcement*, *language acquisition device*). The metaphorical potential of these complex, multifarious ideas gives the L2 teacher a promising opportunity to adopt the blueprint model and talk about them in terms of their source domains which, due to their tangibility, are easier to grasp and process. For instance, the concept of *language acquisition device* can be approached by referring to it as a special box situated in human mind, while the concept of *affective filter* can be highlighted and discussed as a barrier through which, if its level is high, few or no positive signals will pass. In this way, the abstract target domain of learner experience is activated and fueled by critically drawing on the literal, source domain-specific entities, which is likely to culminate in the effective retention of new or problematic issues (Boers, 2000).

2.3. The empirical perspective on metaphor in L2 education

Over a period of almost three decades metaphor has been frequently used as an instrument of investigating teachers' and learners' perspectives on learning and teaching processes, including their personal attitudes, beliefs, values and expectations (Saban et al., 2007), also in relation to the L2 educational context (Cameron & Low, 1999; Katz, 1996).

Research into metaphors created by teachers has revealed their perception towards, among other things, the *classroom, teaching, learning*, the *teacher* and the *learner*. For example, Bowen and Marks (1994) brought to light such different metaphors of the classroom as workshop, factory, playground, greenhouse, church, prison or minefield. When it comes to the metaphorical conceptualization of the teaching process, in Cortazzi & Jin's (1999) research project, it was associated with a journey, plant growth, a skill, an occupation, entertaining, searching for treasure, a family relationship, a war or construction. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) also indicated teachers' perception of learning as a click, movement, light and jigsaw. As regards teachers' understanding of their own roles and responsibilities, a number of studies have shown that they viewed themselves as, for instance, gardeners, parents, prophets, pearl oysters and physicians (Clarken, 1997), caregivers, directors, agents of change, referees and authority figures (Marchant, 1992) or leaders/instructors, providers/nurturers, agents of change and artists (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000).

Another important avenue of inquiry refers to learners' metaphorical understandings of the nature of language learning as well as the roles that teachers and they themselves play in this process. As a result, students were found to perceive learning as, for example, nurturing, search and journey (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999), or exploration, journey, cooking, personal growth/identity renewal, fun and entertainment, communication bridge, problem solving or quest for knowledge, to name but a few categories described in Farjami's (2012) study. As for the EFL teachers, students metaphorized them as, for instance, caretakers, givers and fundamental contributors to language pedagogy (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008) or providers of knowledge, organizers, friends, spiritual leaders, nurturers, entertainers, parents, counselors and innovators (Torghabeh et al., 2009). With regard to how learners' view their own place in the L2 classroom, in Bozlk's (2002) study, the metaphors they came up with were divided into such three categories as animal metaphors (e.g., fish, snail), object metaphors (e.g., sponge, crayon), action metaphors (e.g., drying a counter) and human metaphors (e.g., toddler, entrepreneur).

Finally, it is worth mentioning Oxford et al.'s (1998) study carried out among students, teachers and former students with the aim of examining various perspectives on the concept of a teacher, with a special emphasis laid on

the language teacher. Metaphors generated by the participants were grouped around four major philosophical categories of the teaching field, namely: *social order*, where the teacher is metaphorized as, for example, a manufacturer, a competitor or a hanging judge empowered to take full charge of what transpires in the classroom as is the case with the audiolingual method; *cultural transmission* with the teacher viewed as a gatekeeper or a repeater who controls his/her students' access to and pursuit of knowledge, which can be exemplified by the grammar-translation method; *learner-centered growth*, which is conducive to the enhancement of the learner's full potential, with the teacher playing the roles of a nurturer, a scaffolder or an entertainer as can be seen in community language learning or the silent way; and *social reform*, where the teacher and students assume an equal share of responsibility for the learning process and where the former is, therefore, perceived as an acceptor or a learning partner.

As has already been mentioned, there is ample research into teaching- and learning-related metaphors revealing the importance of this device as a tool for analyzing the ways in which teachers and students conceptualize their work as well as for enabling them to systematize this process. At the same time and to the best of the present author's knowledge, the role of metaphor in shaping and fostering potential L2 teachers' professional awareness has been largely ignored, which is the gap to be filled by the study described below.

3. The study

3.1. Research question

The study was guided by the following research question: *What is the role of metaphor use in enhancing the English majors' explicit knowledge and understanding of certain English language teaching and learning concepts?* The answer to this question was sought with regard to the relationship between the target domain of these concepts and the source domain of their lexicalized conceptualizations.

3.2. Participants

A total of 25 English majors from a Polish university participated in the study. They were the final fifth-year students completing a two-year MA program. 13 of them (11 females and 2 males) studied full time, while 12 (all females) were part-time students. All of them were enrolled in the teaching specialization since they were planning to become English teachers after graduation. The respondents' command of English could be specified as oscillating between B2 and C1 according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001).

3.3. Data collection and analysis

The data were collected by means of a three-part structured questionnaire. In its first part, the respondents were expected to provide general background information including their sex as well as year and type (full-time or part-time) of study. In the second part of the questionnaire, they were asked to answer five closed 5-point Likert-scale questions (1 – *strongly disagree*, 5 – *strongly agree*) aimed at measuring the participants' degree of acceptance of the metaphorical definitions concerning five English language teaching- and learning-related concepts. Those were such concepts as: *method* (e.g., "weapon used to overcome problems and engage soldiers' minds"), *error* (e.g., "a wrong step on the right path"), *feedback* (e.g., "a book of wisdom, something to focus on"), *writing* (e.g., "formalin which preserves knowledge") and *induction* (e.g., "a genealogical tree – we go from the general term 'family' to our ancestors").To each of the concepts in question six definitions were ascribed.[2] Finally, in the third part of the questionnaire, the students were expected to write a 300-word descriptive paragraph elaborating on one of the previously assessed definitions which they found particularly interesting and/or inspiring. At this point, it is warranted to explain that the five English language teaching- and learning-related concepts included in the questionnaire were chosen on purpose. More specifically, they were found to be repeatedly misunderstood by English majors that the present author had been working with over a period of two decades. For example, they often used to confuse the inductive approach to teaching grammar with its deductive counterpart, feedback with reinforcement or teaching methods with learning strategies.

The data thus gathered underwent both quantitative and qualitative analysis. As for the former, it consisted in calculating the means and standard deviations for all the Likert-scale statements and counting the number of definitions the respondents decided to reflect on and discuss, whereas the latter analysis type drew on reading and rereading all the descriptive paragraphs touching upon the definitions chosen by the participants. In the course of the first reading, the author familiarized herself with the descriptions gaining a general insight into their content. This was followed by a detailed review of the participants' written work intended to explore their perspectives on metaphorical definitions that they chose for interpretation and, as a result, delve into their attitude

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[2] It needs to be added that all the definitions derive from a different questionnaire that was completed a year prior to the present study by 118 English Philology students recruited from three Polish institutions of higher education. Its aim was to investigate the potential of metaphor for enhancing the understanding of various aspects of the EFL teaching profession. One of its two tasks was to create metaphorical definitions of the five aforementioned terms, the most inspiring and/or interesting of them being used in this questionnaire.

to and knowledge about the ELT concepts specified by those definitions. It should be mentioned that all inconsistent cases were subject to consideration on the part of the researcher and when difficulties in interpretation arose, they were discussed with a colleague, also a specialist in applied linguistics, until an agreement could be reached.

3.4. Findings

3.4.1. Definitions that scored highest and lowest

The quantitative analysis of the data related to the second part of the question-naire demonstrated that, overall, the study participants' most preferred defini-tions of the English language teaching and learning concepts concerned *induc-tion* and *writing*, whereas the least favorite ones were connected with *method* and *error* (see Figure 1).
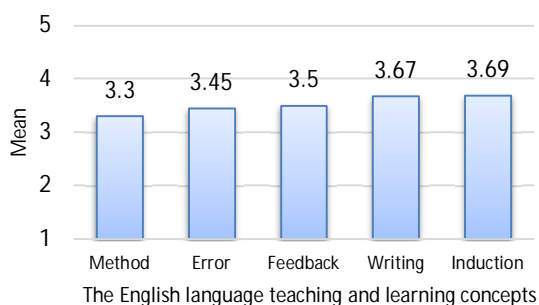

Figure 1 Participants' most and least favored English language teaching and learning concepts

The participants of the study were in favor of the following definitions of the concept of *method*: "the meal which, according to our experience, will be the best in getting rid of hunger" ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.29$) and "weapon used to overcome problems and engage soldiers' minds" ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.96$). In con-trast, they regarded "a ball that you have to put into the basket" ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 0.97$) and "a material with which a path is covered (asphalt, cobblestones)" ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.32$) as the least favorite definitions of the said notion. As far as the concept of *error* is concerned, the following definitions obtained the highest means: "a slight wound, but when it is healed, it makes us stronger" ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.65$) and "a wrong step on the right path" ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.95$). The respondents' lowest-scored definitions included such items as: "an agent provocateur trying to mislead us" ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 0.96$) and "a hole in the whole" ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.26$).

As regards the notion of *feedback*, the highest means were calculated in the case of the following two items: "a book of wisdom, something to focus on" (*M* = 4.08, *SD* = 0.81) and "a boomerang that comes from the teacher or the student" (*M* = 3.83, *SD* = 0.92). Conversely, definitions with the lowest means were as follows: "a conversation between a pirate and an officer" (*M* = 2.64, *SD* = 0.99) and "smaller or bigger treats given to students" (*M* = 3.28, *SD* = 0.89). With regard to the concept of *writing*, the students were in favor of the following definitions: "drawing your thoughts for others to see" (*M* = 4.33, *SD* = 0.76) and "opportunity to make an error, notice it and correct it" (*M* = 3.96, *SD* = 0.91). In contrast, the two definitions of the concept of writing: "it is like sowing seeds in the soil" (*M* = 3.17, *SD* = 0.70) and "a skill making soldiers more patient and giving them a chance to practice planning skills" (*M* = 3.33, *SD* = 1.31) were regarded by them as the least preferred ones. Lastly, when it comes to *induction,* the highest-rated were such definitions as: "it is like a bridge which connects students to new knowledge" (*M* = 4.04, *SD* = 0.84) and "moving from small things to a bigger deal" (*M* = 3.88, *SD* = 0.93). At the same time, the following items were among the least appreciated: "a hidden meaning" (*M* = 3.28, *SD* = 0.79) and "discovery of something special" (*M* = 3.52, *SD* = 0.96).

3.4.2. Interpretations of and reflections on selected definitions[3]

Concerning the results obtained from the third part of the questionnaire (i.e., the one in which the participants were requested to concentrate on one of the definitions they strongly favored and elaborate on it in a descriptive and interpretive manner), most of them decided to comment on definitions devoted to *error* (15 students). Fewer respondents decided to focus in their descriptions on writing (5 students) and on induction (2 students), whereas no one opted for the notion of method.

Regarding the notion of error, the majority of students chose to elaborate on the definitions indicating it as "a wrong step on the right path" and "a slight wound, but when it is healed, it makes us stronger" (7 students each). The participants tended to consider errors as the evidence of learning the target language ("If somebody makes an error, it means that she or he tries to learn sth, he/she makes an effort to achieve his/her goal . . .") and as the natural part of learning the language ("Each learner begins with the small amount of knowledge and in the process of learning he or she becomes more and more fluent. So, errors are the natural step while learning").

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[3] The participants' original spelling and grammar have been retained.

In view of the fact that errors have been regarded by some study participants as part and parcel of learning a foreign language, one student claimed that they "can teach us something, but only if we think of them and analyze them." As stated by another respondent, this is because "error correction demands thinking, it is not a mechanical process." Some other participants were of the opinion that "errors might have a beneficial effect if they're corrected properly" and this is why language teachers should "provide appropriate feedback in order to help a student to deal with his/her shortcomings." They should also offer error correction tasks that learners are "asked to do as additional homework to make the error heal quicker." Such tasks were referred to as "ointment" that helps to "cure the wound" by one of the participants of the study.

It should also be noted that one of the respondents claimed that language learners should not be "corrected every time they make an error." According to this respondent, "the teacher should only give them some slight signs that there is something wrong with their utterance." This is because language learners should become responsible for their own learning and be aware of their errors. Students should be encouraged to self-correct and to reflect on the quality of their work due to the fact that the self-corrected language can "be better memorized, (...) it will make them stronger." Nevertheless, teachers and students should "somehow gather weapons to deal with problems" and "defeat them with our knowledge once and for all."

The analysis of the data also showed that errors and learning were compared with risk-taking and a journey, respectively. Referring to one of the definitions of the concept of error (i.e., "falling down on a bumpy road, but getting up quickly"), one respondent claimed that language learners "who make mistakes show us that they are taking risks in trying to develop, to move forward." He/she understood learning as journey and viewed "the idea of an error as a fall because of the bad quality of the road." According to the said respondent, "the bad condition of the road suggests that the knowledge regarding a specific topic is not yet complete or fully developed, but the learner still tries to take this road to get to his destination." The process of learning a language was also juxtaposed with "some stages of living:"

> In some cases we are lost, confused and fed up. In such situations we are more prone to make errors. We can also slip on our way while having a 'good' period of our life. According to some researchers, not only weak students make errors but also those who work hard. 'A bumpy road' may be referred to the obstacles that appear while acquiring new knowledge. Obstacles may be various like the lack of time, boredom, too difficult material or the lack of motivation. Students who perform well at school may have worse day or complicated situation at home.

As regards the concept of writing, it was perceived, on the one hand, as a very important language skill, and, on the other, as not very popular. The importance of the skill in question was linked with making "us more focused on our work, develop planning skills and in a way teaches us to select the material" as well as with offering "many opportunities to become more focused, patient and aware of ourselves and the strategies we can always use." The skill of writing was not considered to be very interesting due to the fact that it "demands a big effort" and requires "certain knowledge." In addition, the study participants found writing valuable for a number of reasons. First, writing is beneficial for shy students since by means of it they can communicate with others ("Some people are too shy to express their thoughts and writing gives them the opportunity to let the others know what they're thinking."). Second, writing equals more control on the part of language learners ("writing is easier to control than speech"). Third, people who read the written materials "can finally understand people who couldn't communicate with them before." Finally, writing means creating since "written work is as artistic as a sculpture or a painting."

When it comes to the concept of feedback, one of the respondents compared a teacher with a writer who writes chapters each containing positive and negative feedback, the former of which was devoted to motivating and increasing students' self-confidence and the latter focused on errors as "the evidence of learning." What is more, this participant understood feedback as "something that two sides have to focus on." One "side" (i.e., the learner), "can always go back to 'that' book and monitor his/her own progress and abilities, observe changes that take place in the process of learning and what have to be developed yet." The other "side" (i.e., the teacher), can offer feedback "for his/her students and monitor them, see the progress they did and what should be done more." In a somewhat similar vein, another student thought feedback provided by the teacher to be something that should "draw students' attention to their strengths and weaknesses which they are sometimes unaware of" and "always be motivating." According to this student, "feedback can have a great impact on students and it can work as both motivating and demotivating source of knowledge about oneself. Thus students' reflection in the mirror should always be objective and informative and not judgmental."

Finally, as stated above, the definitions related to the concept of induction were chosen and commented on by only two students. According to one of them, inductive teaching methods are beneficial and fun. This is because noticing "a rule by our[selves] it is easier to remember it" and students "feel satisfied if they come up with something . . . if they see, that they are able to understand rule before it is verbalized" by the teacher. Thus, induction was viewed as an act of recreating the language ("It is like they recreate language on their own once

again"). The other participant, in turn, considered the concept of induction as "one of the best ways to force students to think and strengthen their thinking abilities." He/she compared language learners with "detectives who seek for the solution of a mystery box" by "giving students pieces of puzzle and asking them to focus on small similarities to create the whole picture."

4. Discussion

Concerning the Likert scale-based part of the questionnaire, as has already been mentioned, the subjects had some preferences when it comes to the metaphorical definitions of ELT concepts, the most favored ones referring to *induction*. It has to be underlined that since induction is one of the most difficult notions to teach as it is very often confused with deduction or just overlooked and easily forgotten, the author decided to include one incorrect definition ("a genealogical tree – we go from the general term 'family' to our ancestors") and check whether this will mislead the students. It turned out that the majority of them had not chosen it, which allows the author to assume that the concept in question was properly understood by the respondents, though only two of them decided to elaborate on it in the final part of the questionnaire. The second most favored group of definitions concerned *writing* among which the students mainly accepted two statements underlining the communicative and reflective qualities of this skill. To be more precise, they showed the understanding of writing as a tool for sharing ideas with others, thus moving away from a stereotyped view that it is a monological process. It may also be presumed that the participants looked at writing as a skill encouraging self-correction. When it comes to the definitions of *feedback*, the respondents were attracted by its image as a boomerang, which reveals that they perceived it as a bilateral process depending on both the teacher and the learner. As far as the definitions of *error* are concerned, the students chose the one indicating it as the evidence of learning that, if only properly dealt with, can drive them forward. At the same time, they did not show preference for a traditional perspective on error as an undesirable phenomenon that needs to be avoided. Finally, the participants opted for those definitions of *method* which underscored the importance of experience in choosing the right tool that would arouse learners' interest and help cope with possible problems.

As for the descriptive part of the questionnaire, it can be observed that the respondents' attempts at interpreting selected definitions resulted in the creation of their own linguistic metaphors which, in turn, enhanced their understanding of the concepts those definitions referred to. In other words, selected definitions in which different abstract applied linguistic terms were conceptualized as more tangible items (e.g., error as a wrong step, feedback as a book of wisdom,

induction as a discovery) were analyzed with the help of the students' individual linguistic expressions (e.g., "a small scratch that does not even need any sticking plaster," "failures are necessary in our lives. We are created to be imperfect."). This is what allowed them to gradually switch from the surface, source-domain entities to a deep, target-domain level of thinking (Lakoff, 1993) (see Figure 2).
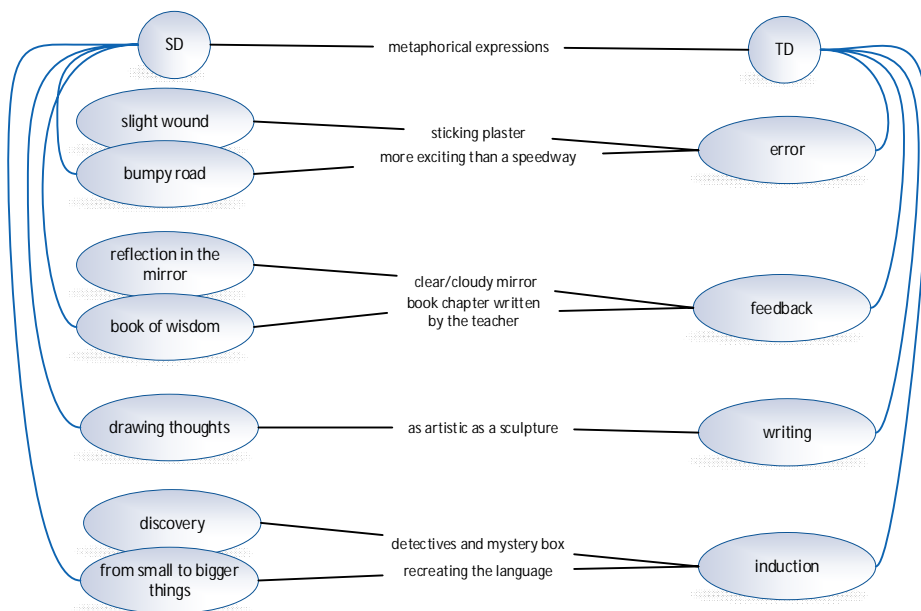

Figure 2 Participants' source domain-driven lexicalization of target domain ideas (the author's design)

As a consequence of the cross-domain processing of the definitions under discussion, the respondents brought into their descriptions various L2 pedagogy-related concepts (e.g., *mistake* vs. *error*, *induction* vs. *deduction*, *affective filter*, *cognitive* and *affective feedback*, *self-correction*, *reflection*, *strategies*, *planning skills*, *risk-taking*, *language acquisition*) which they found worth exploring in greater detail. It can be, therefore, inferred that the metaphorical definitions activated the participants' explicit knowledge and increased their curiosity about those L2 concepts. They turned out to be more involved in the discussion devoted to these issues than it could ever happen during regular ELT methodology classes. Many of the respondents' comments revealed their eagerness to seek recipes to cope with different problems encountered in the L2 learning contexts. For instance, they paid a lot of attention to self-reflection, self-awareness ("deep analysis of our skills") and ability to take responsibility for one's own actions as the fundamental characteristics of successful language

learners (Benson, 2001). In the opinion of some of the respondents, many problems could be solved by the teacher who creates favorable conditions in the L2 classroom, that is, one who is sensitive to his/her students' needs and who relies not only on standardized tests but also on the on-going provision of information on his/her students' strengths and weaknesses. The participants also highlighted self-correction as an important alternative to teacher correction that could motivate them to become "conscious explorers" of a new language. In general, the respondents underlined the relationship between effective L2 learning and certain affective factors connected with learner personality like motivation, self-confidence, frustration or anxiety. Interestingly, three participants endeavored to interpret chosen metaphorical definitions with reliance on *other* (kinds of) *knowledge* (Bialystok, 1978) referring to culture (mottos and sayings) and theories of education. For example, a Latin motto *charta non erubescit* [paper does not blush] was used to explain the advantage of writing over speaking for shy students who gain the opportunity to communicate their thoughts to others in a stress-free way. One more example relates to another student's attempt to establish a link between John Dewey's understanding of *failure* and one of the definitions of *error*; as a result, error was discussed as an instructive phenomenon to be profited from by language learners to the same extent as L2 learning success.

At this point it is worthwhile to compare the results of this study with the findings obtained from the research conducted on a group of 27 second-year BA students of English Philology who were invited to fill in the same questionnaire[4] (Zawodniak & Kruk, 2018). First, it should be noted that while in the group of BA students seven descriptions failed to address the intended topic, in the group of their MA counterparts there was only one such case. In the BA group three of those descriptions pertained to *induction*, which, as has already been mentioned above, is not an easy concept to understand, especially towards the end of a one-semester course of English Language Pedagogy. The analysis of selected metaphorical definitions led the members of both groups to reflect on various aspects of L2 education, though it has to be admitted that the MA students used in their descriptions more applied linguistic terms (38) than their BA counterparts (12). It may be assumed that the latter group's knowledge about ELT methodology did not go together with the ability to use related terminology which, due to a relatively short duration of the course, may have still been subject to controlled processing. Conversely, the MA group members' knowledge, after a three-semester course which made it possible for them to practice, recycle and in consequence effectively retain and coordinate L2 pedagogy-related knowledge

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[4] In this section, comparative comments are made only in relation to the third part of the questionnaire which refers to the participants' interpretations of definitions selected from its second part.

and metalinguistic information, appeared to have reached the level of automatic processing (McLaughlin, 1990; McLaughlin et al., 1983). Nevertheless, the BA group evidently did not lag behind the MA students when it comes to the production of inventive linguistic metaphors and general engagement with the task. In sum, regardless of how advanced the respondents' ELT methodology knowledge was, the two groups were equally attracted by the opportunity to interpret metaphorical definitions and equally successful in lexicalizing the target-domain applied linguistic concepts through a variety of more literal and unambiguous source-domain terms.

5. Limitations of the study and directions for future research

As for the methodological constraints of the present study which limit the interpretation of gathered data, it has to be admitted that the applied questionnaire did not include a section meant to examine the respondents' opinions on the use of metaphor in the L2 classroom. Such a section would be an interesting addition to the questionnaire shedding light on the potential L2 teachers' personal expectations connected with whether and how metaphor may contribute to an in-depth understanding of the complexities of L2 learning/teaching processes as well as to the improvement of L2 teaching practice. Another possibility may be the adoption of a mixed methods approach which would entail a combination of a questionnaire used in this study and a semi-structured interview inquiring into the subjects' individual perceptions of metaphor as a tool for developing their professional awareness as L2 teachers. It is also worthwhile to indicate that an interesting option would be conducting a longitudinal study aiming to examine the interpretivist stance on metaphor (the blueprint model) (Palinscar, 1998; Tomlin et al., 1997). Such a study would extend over a sequence of classes devoted to covering various L2 pedagogy-related issues such as, for instance, teacher personality, teacher/learner autonomy, strategic competence, disciplinary problems, teaching grammar (whole-class discussions, student diaries).

6. Pedagogical implications and conclusions

The study revealed promising opportunities for conceptual metaphors to function as models for a range of applied linguistic ideas that can be better understood when associated with certain more literal and semantically transparent entities. The respondents' analysis of selected metaphorical definitions and the creation of their own linguistic metaphors inspired them to reflect on various aspects of L2 education. They appeared to enjoy this work and found it quite natural, which can be explained by indicating that "the everyday talk of students and teachers is thoroughly imbued with metaphor" (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, p. 150),

though they may not always realize it. The students' willingness to do that task shows that metaphor is meaningfully linked to learning and that it is worth treating as a valuable addition to language teaching tools. What deserves special pedagogical attention is the blueprint model which approaches metaphor on a communicative, interactive and experiential basis. To be more precise, the teacher adopting this model identifies the difficulty, presents the problematic issue via metaphor and encourages his/her students to constructively act on this material so as to give it a new shape or formulate some hypotheses and try them out (Petrie & Oshlag, 1996). The students' reaction to the descriptive part of the questionnaire, including numerous analytical and evaluative comments, proves the usefulness of such tasks which might be profited from not only as part of tests or questionnaires, as was the case with the present study, but first of all as the component of regular L2 classes. Overall, the image that emerges from the students' metaphorical definition-induced comments shows them, to paraphrase Svalberg's (2009, pp. 246-247) words, as cognitively and affectively engaged with various applied linguistic concepts since they paid focused attention to them, exhibited a positive, autonomous disposition towards them and wanted to construct their knowledge about them.

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