# EFL Teachers' Perception about Metaphor-Based Teaching

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**ABSTRACT:** *Despite the myriad of research in the advantages of utilizing conceptual metaphor in teaching and learning languages, no research was conducted to survey the perception of teachers about metaphor-based teaching. This study attempts to fill this gap by examining how this innovative pedagogic application has been perceived and the extent to which it has been applied and received in the teachers' community worldwide. A questionnaire was administered and collected date from 255 EFL teachers worldwide. The results show that conceptual fluency is perceived as the least important language aspect by teachers despite the very multitude of research that demonstrate its essentialness in attaining fluency. The correlation between the teachers' years of experience and perception about teaching conceptual metaphor is statistically insignificant (r= 0.02, p= 0.72). The findings support the need to rethink teacher education, redirecting teachers' further teaching efforts to integrating the overlooked role of metaphor-based teaching which is not wholly recognized in language classrooms.*

**KEYWORDS:** conceptual metaphors; contemporary theory of metaphor; EFL; English teaching; metaphor-based teaching; teacher perception

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching English for years, one can observe that EFL learners of English reach a stagnant stage wherein they do not go beyond grammatical well-formedness of sentences. That is to say, students produce grammatically well-formed sentences which are devoid of creative use of language such as using conceptual metaphor. This language feature, of which EFL students' language lacks, and, therefore, hinders them from reaching their full linguistic potential, is referred to as conceptual fluency (Danesi, 1992).

Conceptual fluency, which can be enhanced by being metaphorically competent, is rarely promoted at schools and is not fully integrated into syllabuses. Even if conceptual metaphor is

taught, it would still be taught as a language ornament that is used only in poetry and literary works. Within the field of cognitive linguistics, metaphor is a linguistic phenomenon that is pervasive in our daily language and which allows "us to understand one domain of experience in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 117). Numerous studies demonstrated that conceptual metaphors can foster effective teaching of vocabulary and thus develop students' linguistic proficiency (Kövecses and Szabó, 1996; Boers ,2000; Littlemore, 2002; Nacey, 2010; Pérez, 2019).

Language teachers seem to not initiate any pedagogical interventions, but rather continue their language teaching which aims at improving students' grammatical and communicative competences while ignoring their metaphoric competence and conceptual fluency. There has been a myriad of research within cognitive linguistics investigating the effect of metaphor-based teaching on language learning. This paper intends to survey the perceptions of language teachers worldwide about teaching and using conceptual metaphors as an effective pedagogical tool to facilitate language learning. This paper endeavors to uncover the extent to which Contemporary Theory of Metaphor has been practically integrated in language classrooms as well as the nature of the causes preventing teachers from utilizing CTM.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Contemporary metaphor theory

Metaphor has been considered and is still considered by some as a linguistic device that we utilize for the purpose of creating a rhetorical effect. However, metaphor is not an ornamental tool that is used in literary works solely. It is, however, a linguistic phenomenon that is pervasive in our everyday language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Lakoff & Johnson (1980: 5) stated that metaphor is the process of "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another." He further adds that conceptual metaphor brings into play two domains of which one is physical (source domain) and the other is abstract (target domain). Conceptual metaphor thus assists in understanding the complex abstract through the use of the more familiar and physical entity. A long way from the classic and Aristotelian definition of metaphor that views metaphor as a deviant use of language and as a mere figure of speech, Kövecses (2020: 2) defines conceptual metaphor as a "systematic set of correspondences between two domains of experience." In attempting to understand our daily surroundings, metaphors assist in conceptually comprehending "the cognitively less easily accessible domains in terms of the more easily accessible ones" (Kövecses, 2020: 5).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980), regard everyday language not only as a linguistic phenomenon, but also a cognitive one. In their book, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) stated that human cognition is generally characterized by three properties. First, human cognition is embodied. Second, it is unconscious and automatic. Third, most of abstract concepts are metaphorical in nature. Metaphor is, therefore, a tool that can affect and change conceptual structures and,

consequentially, shape the way we experience the world (Thomas, 2010). They further assert that our language is laden with conceptual metaphors. These conceptual metaphors define our daily experiences in that they conceptually structure how we perceive things. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) gave the example of ARGUMENT IS WAR in English where arguments between people are conceptually structured and perceived of in terms of a war that includes battles, victories, defeats, attacks and tactics. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that our conceptual system of which we use daily is essentially metaphorical. This conceptual system is the lens through which we perceive and react to our reality.

**Language teaching approaches**

**Memorizing Translation Approach**

Language learning strategies are the means by which language learners utilize to make the learning easier, fasters and effective (Oxford, 1990). Learning strategies are of paramount importance in second language proficiency as they play a key role in facilitating the learning process (Cotterall & Reinders, 2004). Chamot et al. (1987: 71) refers to learning strategies as "techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information." Cohen (1998) also defines learning strategies as the conscious procedures the students use to improve their language learning through storage, retention, recall, and application. Memorization is one of the cognitive strategies that is used by language learners. Richards and Schmidt (2013: 359) refers to memorization as "the conscious process of establishing information in memory." Ozkan and Kesen (2008) surveyed students' beliefs about learning strategies and reported that memorization in language learning is the most used strategy among language learners.

Students opt for the memorization strategy for various reasons. First, memorization and drills better help students in preparing them for communication in real life situations (Ikuo, 2013). Second, early language learners may find memorization as the only way which gives them a sense of fulfilment and progress (Gairns & Redman, 1986). Third, some educational systems may encourage learners to depend on memorization as their learning strategy (Ozkan & Kesen, 2008). A study by Yusuf (2010) shows that memorization is an efficient learning strategy as it brings good results, empowers the brain, and improves oration. Another study by Porter (2014), on the other hand, investigated the effect of the memorization and the conceptual understanding methods on students. The study showed that the students who were taught using the memorization method did fare well in the delayed posttest with their level of knowledge acquisition and retention continuing to improve.

Despite the benefits of memorization mentioned above, the following studies and researchers state that memorization is not a recommendation strategy that always leads to effective learning. Lujan and DiCarlo (2006) argued that learning is not all about memorizing materials. It is the active

processing of materials, that includes finding, evaluating and applying information, that leads to successful learning. Another study by Khamees (2016) examined English learners' beliefs regarding the use of memorization strategy. It showed that all learners utilized memorization regardless of their efficiency and that they used it mostly for learning literary texts, definitions and vocabulary. The learners favored the memorization strategy because it helped them with improving their English (Khamees, 2016). He further adds that memorization is a low-level cognitive strategy that need be used in tandem with other high-level cognitive strategies for a better English learning.

In addition, memorization could only be efficient when comprehension is prioritized. Memorizing without understanding induces forgetfulness and the inability to make inferences and distinction between important and unimportant information (Khamees, 2016). Weinstein et al. (1989) stated that "high school and college students are well versed at retaining content knowledge long enough to take exams, but dreadfully, inept at maintaining that knowledge in long term memory." Not prioritizing comprehension over memorization also leads to rote learning. Vadidya (1996) argued that rote learning is arbitrary and not a meaningful process that is capable of facilitating internalization of information. It is not a surprise that some students prefer understanding over memorizing materials (Al Taj, 2014).

At this stage, both learners and teachers must distinguish between good and bad memorization. Memorization as a language learning strategy could meet some language learners' needs, but they must be guided to avoid rote learning (Oanh & Hien, 2006). Learners' comprehension of the materials plays a vital role in knowledge acquisition and retention. Ehrilich (1982) conducted a study to investigate the degree of comprehension and recall among learners after a week of a reading task. The study showed that the leaners' recalling ability increases depending on the level of their comprehension of the reading task. Sachs & Chan (2003) corroborate this finding in their study that showed that understanding the materials is more important than just reproducing it. Higher levels of cognitive structures are triggered when a meaningful learning approach is used (Safadar, 2013). Efficient learners make a clear distinction between rote learning which is inefficient and comprehension which facilitates learning. The studies above demonstrated that memorization is a frequently used strategy that can have both good and bad effects on learners' language learning process. The next section discusses an alternative to the memorization approach.

**Conceptual Metaphor Approach and English learning and teaching**

Teaching conceptual metaphors is an innovative pedagogical intervention which can improve L2 learners' interlanguage. This pedagogical intervention aims at applying the Contemporary Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) in the context of L2 teaching and learning. Teaching

English to L2 learners by incorporating conceptual metaphors can assist in vocabulary acquisition (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2008) and retention as conceptual metaphors can provide conceptual organization framework for the lexicon (Pérez, 2019). Conceptual metaphor is, therefore, a vital and essential component that needs to be used in language classrooms and integrated within language syllabi. Teachers should not just focus on the students' grammatical well-formedness, but also on their creative use of language and their metaphoric competence. Metaphoric competence is as important as linguistic and communicative competence (Danesi, 1992) and to be metaphorically competent means to be able to understand metaphors and produce them while communicating (Nacey, 2010).

The teaching of metaphor can be integrated within language instruction and taught through the introduction of activities that raise awareness about conceptual metaphors. For example, cross-linguistic activities wherein students identify metaphorical equivalents in their L1 can be used to compare the use and meanings of metaphors in L1 and L2 and, therefore, make the comprehension process of the conceptual metaphor in hand easier (Pérez, 2019). Other activities such as identifying and categorizing metaphors in a text, describing a picture, and creating a story using metaphors can be used. The activities can aid in acquiring vocabulary in addition to understanding and producing metaphors. This can complement the traditional way of teaching, which is based on memorization, as well as act as an aid for organizing and teaching vocabulary systematically (Pérez, 2019).

A multitude of research was conducted to study the effect of using conceptual metaphors as a teaching tool. Guo (2019) carried out a study wherein he employed a conceptual metaphor-based approach and a traditional approach to teach two groups of Chinese university students who have the same English proficiency. He showed that the experimental group that received the metaphor-based teaching performed and progressed better than the control group that received the traditional way of teaching (p= .000). Further research and evidence from Kövecses and Szabó (1996), Boers (2000), Danesi and Grieve (2010), and Pérez (2019) point to the direction that utilizing a cognitive linguistic framework does indeed assist in language learners in acquiring the vocabulary and metaphors effectively and with a long-term memory retention.

Research in contemporary metaphor theory explains why students' discourse is unnaturally devoid of creative use of language such as metaphor. Howard and his associates stated that an average speaker of English creates about 3000 new metaphors per week (Pollio, Barlow, Fine & Pollio, 1977). This shows that conceptual metaphor is a powerful element in discourse and that literal thinking is actually a limited communicative behavior (Danesi, 1995). Students, therefore, need not only create grammatically correct sentences, but also be able to produce metaphorically loaded sentences. What should be done is to fully integrate conceptual metaphor in language syllabi to instill metaphor awareness in students. This will enable the learners to create metaphor in L2, "organize the steady stream of figurative language they are exposed to" (Boers, 2000: 564), and provide the learners with "the ability to interpret metaphors quickly in conversation" (Littlemore,

2002: 484). Li (2009) stated that only though a direct intervention could the metaphorical competence of language learners be boosted so that their utterances would be conceptually fluent.

**Teacher cognition and its impact on their practice:**

Teachers possess beliefs about many things such as instruction, curriculum, and students. Teachers bring these multifarious beliefs into the classrooms which then affect their teaching practices. Teacher cognition is used here to refer to the beliefs teachers hold about teaching. Within the past 25 years, the generated research in teacher cognition is recognized for its impact on teaching (Richardson, 1996). Several studies showed that language teachers' practices in the classroom are shaped by a variety of factors especially teachers' beliefs (Breen et al., 2001).

Buehl and Beck (2015) reported that teachers' prior language learning experience create cognitions about teaching and learning which then shape their practices in the classrooms. Tsangaridou (2008) conducted a study where she interviewed students after a 13-week student teaching experience and found that student teachers' beliefs were aligned with their practices. For example. Song and Looi's study (2012) reported that teachers with innovation-oriented beliefs put into practice an inquiry-based learning approach that reflected their beliefs. Teachers' beliefs play vital roles and are used to evaluate information, provide guidance, and frame tasks and problems (Fives & Buel, 2012).

The belief-practice relationship can also be influenced by other external factors. Education policies can also impact teachers' beliefs. For instance, the No Child Left Behind policy is reported to have negatively affected the relationship between the teachers and the students (Greene et al., 2008). Many teachers quit their teaching profession due to the pressure of teaching in ways that do not fulfill the students' needs. The availability of resources, the support of parents and administration can also influence the teachers' beliefs and practices (Southerland et al., 2011). All and all, teacher cognitions play an important role in the implementation of beliefs into the teaching practices.

**Methodology**

**Instrument**

The main method for collecting data in this research was a questionnaire. In order to collect data related to teachers' perception on teaching conceptual metaphor, an online questionnaire was administered using the Typeform application. It was structured with 14 questions that include multiple choice, open response, forced choice, and opinion scale. A Likert scale of 5 points was used. Responders were given questions and statements and were asked to specify the level of importance in five points: (1) Not at all important; (2) Low importance; (3) Neutral; (4) Moderately Important; (5) Very important. A cut off score of mean equal to 3 and above (on a 5-point scale)

was used to indicate the most important while a cut off score of mean less than 3 was used to determine the less significant.

The questionnaire includes 'skip' buttons for the purpose of eliminating arbitrariness in responses whenever the question is irrelevant to the participants. The questionnaire was shared online and sent to teachers of English worldwide. The questionnaire was distributed through social media platforms in the form of a QR code or a link. The first stage of the questionnaire introduced the purpose of the research and stated that by continuing, the participants give their consent to take part in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was created in a texting format in which messages are exchanged; resembling a casual chat with a friend. The texting-styled questionnaire is opted for in order to increase responsiveness and reduce the nonresponse bias.

**Data analysis**

Jamovi statistical software version 1.6.23.0 was used to analyze the data. The software is intuitive, user-friendly, and simple. A distinct advantage of using Jamovi software is its ability to encode into text data rather than just variable codes. The data obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed using frequency tables, percentages and means. In addition, a Pearson Correlation analysis was used to examine if there is any statistically significant correlation between the teachers' years of experience and the teaching of conceptual metaphor as well the correlation between the teaching levels and the perception about teaching conceptual metaphor.

**Participants**

The research's main participants were teachers of English as a foreign language. The teachers are located in different schools in different countries. The questionnaire was published online for a duration of 2 months and 255 participants took part in it.  The study did not opt for a small-scale participation of teachers from one school in one country because it risks the research into being context specific. The study, however, opted for a large, open, and random participation of teachers from different contexts.  The more participants in a study, the more confident we can be about the data and its generalizability (Vogt, 2011).

**Results**

The majority of the teachers in this study teach at high schools (44.7%). The second highest group of teachers teach at primary schools (18.4%), followed by teachers in middle school (13.3%). Others, which include teachers in kindergartens, training centers, and other private institutions, amount to 12.9% out of the whole sample size. About 10.2% of the teachers in the present study teach at universities. Teachers in vocational school represent the smallest group in the sample size (0.4%). On average, teachers had 11.8 years of teaching experience (s.d.=8.25), which ranged from a minimum of 1 year to 48 years of experience.

**Teachers' perception about the important aspects in attaining students' fluency**

When the teachers were asked about the aspects that are important in attaining students' fluency, vocabulary ranked the highest (mean 4.22, s.d.= 0.982). Pronunciation comes second in rank (mean 3.93, s.d.= 1.03), followed by pragmatic skills (mean 3.77, s.d.= 1.01). Grammar ranked as the fourth most important (mean 3.61, s.d.= 1.03). Metaphor received the lowest emphasis in the ranking scale (mean 3.27, s.d.= 1.04).

**Table 1. Important aspects in attaining students' fluency.**

|  | Pronunciation | Vocabulary | metaphor | Grammar | pragmatic skills |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | 255 | 255 | 255 | 255 | 255 |
| Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | 3.93 | 4.22 | 3.27 | 3.61 | 3.77 |
| Median | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| Standard deviation | 1.03 | 0.982 | 1.04 | 1.03 | 1.01 |
| Minimum | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Maximum | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |

**Teachers' ranking of language competences**

Another aspect that the teachers were asked to rank according to importance was competences. Six competences were given on a ranking scale (1-5). The results show that communicative competence ranked the highest as the most important (mean 4.38, s.d.= 0.910) followed by sociolinguistic competence (mean 3.84, s.d.= 0.980). The third in ranking, which is very close to the sociolinguistic competence, is pragmatic competence (mean 3.82, s.d.= 0.926). Linguistic competence came the fourth in ranking (mean 3.79, s.d.= 0.944), then grammatical competence (mean 3.64, s.d.= 1.00). Metaphorical competence is, again, ranked the lowest (mean 3.28, s.d.= 1.04).

**Table 2. Ranking of competences.**

|  | grammatical competence | Communicative competence | pragmatic competence | Sociolinguistic competence | Metaphorical competence | Linguistic competence |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | 255 | 255 | 255 | 255 | 255 | 255 |
| Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | 3.64 | 4.38 | 3.82 | 3.84 | 3.28 | 3.79 |
| Median | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Standard deviation | 1.00 | 0.910 | 0.926 | 0.980 | 1.04 | 0.944 |
| Minimum | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Maximum | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |

**Teachers' perception about metaphor and metaphor-based teaching**

After ranking the language aspects, skills, and competences, the teachers were asked to define metaphor. The majority of the teachers (54.9%/ N: 140) referred to metaphor as both a language ornament (e.g. a poetic and literary tool) and an everyday linguistic phenomenon. The second group of teachers (39.6%/ N: 101) defined metaphor as a mere language ornament. The smallest group (5.5%/ N: 14), on the other hand, perceive of metaphor as an everyday linguistic phenomenon and not as a mere figure of speech.
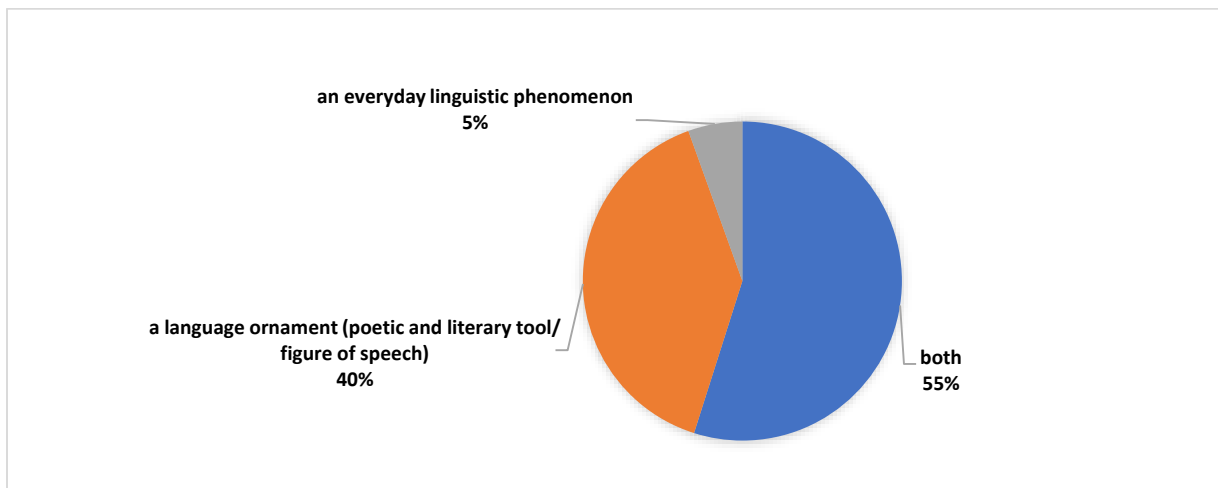


**Figure 1. The percentage of how teachers define metaphor.**

**Teachers' perception about the usefulness of metaphor-based teaching**

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK

The figure below shows the percentages of teachers who think that metaphor can help in learning vocabulary based on the 1—5 ranking scale. About 33.2% (N:80) replied that metaphor is moderately important, 28.6% (N: 69) replied neutrally, 25% (N: 62) see metaphor as very important, 8.3% (N: 20) and 4.1% (N: 4.1) view metaphor with low importance and no importance, respectively. The teachers in general (N: 241) who replied to the question consider metaphor and its ability to help in learning vocabulary of moderate importance (mean 3.68, s.d.= 1.07).
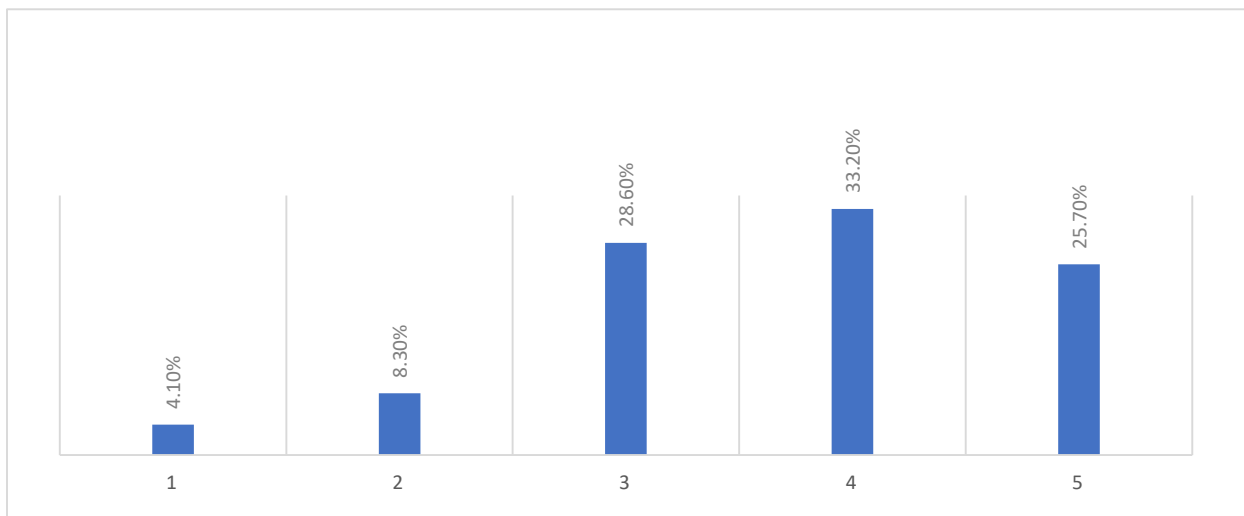


**Figure 2. Percentage of teachers who think metaphor can help in learning vocabulary.**

**Table 3. Metaphor and its ability to help in learning vocabulary.**

|  | Do you think metaphor can help in learning vocabulary? |
| --- | --- |
| N | 241 |
| Missing | 14 |
| Mean | 3.68 |
| Median | 4 |
| Standard deviation | 1.07 |
| Minimum | 1 |
| Maximum | 5 |

**The correlation between teachers' years of experience and the teaching of conceptual metaphor**

Examining whether there is any correlation between the teachers' years of experience and the teaching of conceptual metaphor, a Pearson Analysis was used to calculate the correlation. Pearson

correlation showed that the correlation between the teachers' years of experience and perception about teaching conceptual metaphor is statistically insignificant (r= 0.02, p= 0.72).

**Table 4. Correlation between teachers' years of experience and the teaching of conceptual metaphor.**

|  |  | Years of experience | metaphor |
|---|---|---|---|
| Years of experience | Pearson's r | — |  |
|  | df | — |  |
|  | p-value | — |  |
| metaphor | Pearson's r | 0.022 | — |
|  | df | 252 | — |
|  | p-value | 0.722 | — |

**The correlation between teachers' teaching levels and the teaching of conceptual metaphor**

In addition to the fact that teachers have varying years of experience, the teaching levels is also a variable that was taken into consideration to examine whether the teaching levels (students' age across school levels) was a factor that influences the implementation of metaphor-based teaching. For this reason, another correlation analysis took place involving the teaching levels and the perception about conceptual metaphor. The correlation between the teaching levels and the perception about teaching conceptual metaphor is, too, not statistically significant: (r= 0.03, p= 0.59).

**Table 5. Correlation between teachers' teaching levels and the teaching of conceptual metaphor.**

|  |  | Teaching levels | metaphor |
|---|---|---|---|
| Years of experience | Pearson's r | — |  |
|  | df | — |  |
|  | p-value | — |  |
| metaphor | Pearson's r | 0.034 | — |
|  | df | 253 | — |
|  | p-value | 0.590 | — |

The findings in the correlation analysis tell us loud and clear that there is no statistically significant correlation between the years of experience and teaching of conceptual metaphor nor between the teaching levels and the perception about teaching conceptual metaphor. The following section discusses the results and findings in more details.

## DISCUSSION

**Teachers' perception about metaphor-based teaching:**

The results confirm that conceptual fluency is perceived as the least important by the teachers. The teachers perceive of other language aspects such as grammar and pragmatic skills as more important than conceptual fluency. Conceptual fluency, as the teachers reported, is the least important language aspect that needs emphasis in language syllabi; despite the fact that conceptual metaphor plays a crucial part in the students' fluency than grammar. Danesi and Grieve (2010) found that the most common errors students make during communication are negative conceptual transfers. This suggests that grammar errors do not negatively hinder meaning-transfer during communication as does a lack of conceptual competence in the target language.

Even when the teachers were asked to rank the language aspects according to importance in attaining students' fluency, conceptual metaphor came last in importance after pragmatic skills and grammar. A recent study by Quines (2023) reported a weak correlation (r= 0.15) between students' grammatical competence and their speaking and listening performance. The researcher shows that students' speaking fluency was good and that they are capable of achieving high performance in speaking despite their low grammatical competence. This again, corroborates the fact that some teachers are oblivious about the importance of conceptual fluency as evident in their low ranking of conceptual metaphor in favor of other language aspects such as grammar which is not a valid indicator of fluency.

Metaphorical competence is subordinated to linguistic and grammatical competence by most teachers. Harmer (1991) stated that grammatical competence is of paramount importance for competent users of a language because it enables them to organize and construct bits of language into meaningful messages. However, the accuracy the grammatical competence provides leaners should not be detrimental to fluency. Fluency may be established as the initial goal in teaching a language. Accuracy, on the other hand, will be achieved in later stages and gradually by concentrating on phonetics, phonology, grammar, and discourse. To be fluent in a language, learners must be able to convert their experiences into a conceptual model that confirms to that of the target language (Danesi, 1995). Danesi (1995) proposed that grammatical and communicative competence are components of verbal fluency while metaphorical competence is a constituent aspect of conceptual fluency. Metaphorical competence is a neglected component in the constellation of language competences that is sometimes even perpetuated in literature.

The ability to understand and apply conceptual metaphors has long been considered a crucial aspect of effective communication, closely linked to the overall ability to use a second language effectively in real-life interactions (Andreou & Galantomos, 2009). However, the significance of metaphor and its role in second language learning may not be readily apparent, leading many EFL teachers, educators, and professionals to overlook or underestimate its importance. This is evident in the results of the research where 46.3% of the teachers (N:118 out of 255) answered that they

have never taught metaphor before. In addition, the teachers who think of metaphor from a Contemporary Metaphor Theory perspective are very rare. Most, however, seem to have a somehow classic view of metaphor (94.5%/ N: 241). A view about metaphor as a figure of speech solely, or as a literary device that can also be borrowed and used in everyday life. Only a few teachers conceive of metaphor as an everyday linguistic phenomenon (5.5%/ N: 14). These teachers seem to understand metaphor from a CMT perspective and, therefore, departed from the classic Aristotelian definition of metaphor.

The teachers who took the questionnaire (N: 241) consider metaphor and its ability to help in learning vocabulary of moderate importance (mean 3.68, s.d.= 1.07). This points to the fact that most EFL teachers still utilize traditional approaches to learning vocabulary. This approach, which is generally based on translation, memorization, and repetition, is not always the best approach to successful learning. Khamees (2016) emphasized that memorization should be used in conjunction with other more advanced cognitive strategies in order to achieve a higher level of English proficiency. Numerous studies demonstrate that conceptual metaphor is a vital teaching tool that can significantly facilitate language learning process better than the traditional approach. Evidence from Kövecses and Szabó (1996), Danesi and Grieve (2010), and Pérez (2019) suggests that employing a cognitive linguistic framework significantly aids language learners in effectively acquiring vocabulary and metaphors while also improving long-term memory retention.

It appears that there is a lack of explicit instruction in figurative language, either due to its being avoided or only partially addressed. It is evident that most EFL teachers are unaware of metaphorical competence and need to improve it in order to be able to integrate it in their teaching. In order to effectively use the conceptual metaphor theory in teaching and learning, it is essential for English teachers to have a thorough understanding of the theory and be able to recognize and summarize any new conceptual metaphors they come across during the teaching process (Li, 2010). Given the importance of being able to use metaphors for effective communication in a second language, conceptual metaphor stands to be of utmost importance when it comes to language instruction (Li, 2010).

## Correlation between teachers' teaching experience and the perception about metaphor-based teaching?

Does more experience and involvement in research mean better teaching performance?

Not necessarily. The Pearson correlation showed that the correlation between the teachers' years of experience and perception about teaching conceptual metaphor is statistically insignificant: ($r= 0.02$, $p= 0.72$). Due to the fact that teachers teach different levels, another Pearson Analysis was

conducted involving the teaching levels and the perception about metaphor-based teaching. The correlation between the teaching levels and the perception about teaching conceptual metaphor is, too, not statistically significant: (r= 0.03, p= 0.59). These results suggest that the teaching experience and the teaching levels (students' age) are not interfering factors in the implementation of metaphor-based teaching.

This statistical insignificance between years of experience/ teaching levels and the perception about metaphor-based teaching could be due to the fact that teachers are different in their teaching approaches, personal knowledge, professional development engagement, and motivation. Ashraf and Ashraf (2015) reported that the teaching profession is beset with poor performance and low competence due to inadequate training, insufficient motivation, and outdated instructional approaches. Another reason for the negative correlation between the years of experience and metaphor-based teaching is that traditional teaching approaches just persist regardless of the years of teaching experience. This could be due to a variety of reasons, one of them being that students mainly prefer personalized traditional teacher-centered approach and view innovative interventions as supplementary tools to the traditional approach, rather than key learning tools (Dimitrios et al., 2013).

In addition, the negative correlation between the years of experience and the perception about metaphor-based teaching could be attributed to the fact that beliefs about teaching do not necessarily impact the teaching practices. Gore et al. (2023) stated that having experience, including continuous engagement in various professional development activities, has a limited effect on the quality of teaching. Teacher education is also of little impact. This is because teacher education focuses on empty techniques rather on decision making and knowledge (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Cochran-Smith (2004) further states that even when teacher education focuses on teachers' knowledge and skills, it does that at the expense of students' learning which gets inadequate attention. Teacher education should provide more adequate attention to the pupils' learning by incorporating elements about up-to-date innovative pedagogical interventions such as metaphor-based teaching which would improve and assist their language learning. Furthermore, our attention should also be directed towards ensuring that teachers have continuous access to effective professional development opportunities throughout their careers. (Gore et al., 2023).

**Conclusion:**

This study comes to the conclusion that the majority of teachers are still unaware of the importance of CMT approach to teaching, while others just pay lip service to it. This aggravates and perpetuates the problem of having students who are metaphorically incompetent; students whose teachers focus on literal correctness of discourse at the expense of creative uses of conceptual metaphors. The significance of metaphor and its role in second language learning may not be readily apparent, leading many EFL teachers, educators, and professionals to overlook or underestimate its importance.

Teacher education as well as professional development trainings for teachers must incorporate at least a few bits of information about Contemporary Metaphor Theory and metaphor-based teaching. Teachers need also to serve as researchers who are resourceful, knowledgeable, and attuned to the latest teaching trends and theories. In addition, teachers are also advised to be in the habit of utilizing a variety of approaches rather than sticking to one. Effective teachers jointly employ diverse teaching strategies to enhance the English learning process and incorporating metaphor-based teaching as one of the teaching strategies does just that.

Nonetheless, the results in this study should be interpreted with caution bearing in mind a number of limitations. The primary limitation is that the research is based on self-report measures. Questionnaires are subject to social desirability and reference bias (West, 2014). The participants may fake the answers reporting favorable teaching behaviors that will make them look good and professional, or they could use their biased standards as reference, of which are interpreted differently from person to person. These can be highly misleading and could result in inaccurate data. In addition, despite the fact that the Contemporary Metaphor Theory has been in the field for decades, the topic of the research struck many teachers as new. This resulted in some teachers refusing taking part in the research with the excuse that they are not the best and most suitable participants to answer the questionnaire.

Further studies are needed to reexamine the assumption regarding the impact of metaphors on perception and thinking, especially the works done by Lera Boroditsky. Do metaphors have an immediate impact on how people think? Does the teaching of conceptual metaphors from a foreign language influence the way students perceive of the world? These are the questions that future studies in the field of metaphor need to resolve once and for all.

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**Appendix: Questionnaire**

This is a simplified version of the questionnaire. An electronic version was used to collect the data.

**EFL Teachers' Perception about Metaphor-Based Teaching Questionnaire**

1- **Nationality:**
2- **Years of experience:**
3- **What level do you teach? (multiple choice):**

a- Primary  b-middle school  c-high school  d-vocational  e-university  f-other

**4- To what extent do these language skills and aspects need more emphasis in language syllabi?** *Rate from 1 (less important) to 5 (very important).*

a-  Grammar
b-  Speaking
c-  Vocabulary
d-  Reading
e-  Pragmatic skills
f-  Conceptual fluency
g-  Values
h-  Projects



rating question example.

**5- How are the following aspects important for the students to attain** fluency? *Rate from 1 (less important) to 5 (very important).*

a-  Pronunciation
b-  Vocabulary
c-  Metaphor
d-  Grammar
e-  Pragmatic skills

**6- Rank the following competences.** *Rate from 1 (less important) to 5 (very important).*

a- Grammatical competence
b- Communicative competence
c- Pragmatic competence
d- Sociolinguistic competence
e- Metaphorical competence
f- Linguistic competence

**7- Give reasons why a particular competence is of paramount importance than other competences?**

**8- Metaphor is**
   a- a language ornament (poetic and literary tool/ figure of speech)
   b- an everyday linguistic phenomenon
   c- both

**9- Have you ever taught metaphor? (yes/ no)**

**10- Do you think metaphor can help in learning vocabulary?** *(Rate from 1 (less common) to 5 (most common).*