Male and Female Lecturer's Metaphorical Talks in University EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

People's social background and empirical knowledge firmly determine their metaphors (Lakoff & Johnsen, 2003: Kovecses, 2010). Since in general men and women have different social experiences and views of life, it is highly assumed that metaphors are strongly influenced by gender. This article explores how gender influences lecturers' metaphorical talks in Indonesian university EFL classrooms and how the figurative talks contribute towards the classroom learning process. It goes over findings of a case study undertaken at a university in Makassar, Indonesia. The findings reveal that the female lecturer's metaphorical talks are more complex than the male lecturer's, implying that the female has more critical thinking. In general, the metaphorical talks given by both sides contribute towards the knowledge acquisition process in the classrooms in that they lead the students to understand the lecturers' certain ideas.

Keywords: Metaphorical Talks, Gender, University EFL Classrooms.

INTRODUCTION

Should an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom be free of metaphors? Should teacher talk always be literal? Either "yes" or "no" seems potential to be the answer to the questions. Saying "yes" means viewing a metaphor as a blurred expression, which can lead to students' confusion or misinterpretation. Meanwhile, saying "no" signals seeing it as a cognitive tool, which helps understand certain ideas, particularly those that cannot be conveyed accurately in literal language (Lakoff & Johnsen, 2003). That a metaphorical instruction is troublesome in the classroom unless it is an effective analogy conveying what the students have to understand deeply seems to be the most acceptable assertion so far.

It is unarguable that the thing called metaphor is actually pervasive in our mind and daily conversation (Lakoff & Johnsen, 2003). In fact, it exists in our mind as a concept or cognitive process, which is called conceptual metaphor, and comes out of our mouth in the "shape" of

metaphorical linguistic expression (Kovecses, 2010). When, for instance, talking about football, we often cannot avoid using attack, defense, strategy, shoot and other war words, implying our tendency to see the world's most popular sport game as a war. In the context of the EFL classroom, teacher often describes, for example, the concept of interrogative sentence by saying "put the auxiliary verb before the subject", signaling that he wants the students to view a sentence as a row of objects, which they are familiar with in their daily life. Or in encouraging the students to have big learning motivation, "English is the key to success" seems to be among the most widely-used expressions uttered by EFL teachers throughout the world. From here, it can simply be learnt that the EFL classroom does need metaphors, both as concepts or cognitive processes and linguistic expressions. In fact, as claimed by Paulson and Theado (2015), metaphors can make new and unfamiliar concepts more meaningful to learners; analogical reasoning through metaphors enhances students' motivation and knowledge acquisition; and students' critical thinking skill can become better through metaphors.

Constructed of two conceptual domains, source and target domain, metaphors are essentially cognitive processes of understanding the world and its phenomena (Lakoff & Johnsen, 2003). The cognitive processes, which typically involve domain borrowings - are determined by our empirical knowledge, which is gained from our empirical experiences (Lakoff & Johnsen, 2023: Kovecses, 2010). This is how the idea of looking at the influence of gender towards teachers' metaphors in the EFL classroom comes up. Being biologically and socially different, men and women in general have different experiences, and the different experiences lead to some differences in empirical knowledge and view of life (Barnett et.al, 2021). The differences, as elucidated by this article, are visible in instructional metaphors circulating in the EFL classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW
1. Metaphor
Traditionally, a metaphor is acknowledged as a figurative expression containing a comparison between two different things; it describes a person or object by referring to something that is considered to have the same characteristics (Kovecses, 2010). In fact, most people seem to merely view it as a literary expression, which cannot be interpreted literally. What Rod Stewart, the legendary British rock singer, means by you're the star in one of his songs, for instance, is absolutely something like you are such a meaningful one rather than you are a very large ball of burning gas seen from the Earth as a point of light in the sky at night. Disputing the traditional perspective, Lakoff and Johnsen (2003) propose that metaphors are actually prevalent in our mind and everyday communication. According to the two cognitive linguistic scholars, metaphors are often used impulsively in idea conveying. Native speakers of English, for instance, are used to using look up, hot spot, cold war and many other metaphorical phrases spontaneously in their daily communication. Besides, when thinking about football, another instance, people often consider the world's most popular game as a war and then use some war words such as attack, defense, shot and strategy when talking about it. In the two cognitive linguistic scholars' ideas, which are known as Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), there are some crucial things about metaphors that should be noted; a) metaphors are not always literary; even ordinary people, those who are neither literary writers nor competent users of language, often use them unconsciously, b) metaphors are naturally properties of concepts, not just of words, c) metaphors are not always based on similarity, and d) metaphors are often

inevitable in daily communication. From here, we can see that metaphors are essentially natural expressions which can occur in all settings of language use; they do not belong to literary works only.

Despite the more actual perspective, the classical statement about the communicative function of metaphors as a rhetorical tool seems to remain undeniable. Regarding this, Ottati and Renstrom (2010) argue that metaphorical discourses are more effective than literal ones in conveying messages and grabbing attention. As a matter of fact, a metaphor is an effective tool that a communicator can use since it presents vivid images, conveys multiple meanings in a concise fashion, or expresses what cannot be stated in literal forms. In short, in the communicative perspective, a metaphor is a weapon that a communicator can use to shoot at a communicative target. For this reason, it is strongly presumed that the ability to apply metaphors in idea conveying is an immense expertise, something that an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher should have in leading the classroom interaction.

While the traditional view only considers the linguistic aspect, Lakoff and Johnsen's (2003) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) tends to see metaphors as cognitive processes. CMT emphasizes that a metaphor consists of two conceptual domains, as well as a set of mappings between them. A conceptual domain is any coherent organization of experience. The conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is called source domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is called target domain. In other words, a metaphor has the formula A is B, where the target domain (A) is comprehended through a source domain (B). This comprehension is based on a set of mappings that exist between elements of A and B. From here, we can see that CMT distinguishes conceptual metaphor from metaphorical linguistic expression. The A is B formula is what is called conceptual metaphor, while a linguistic expression coming as its product is what is called metaphorical linguistic expression.

ARGUMENT IS WAR
- He *attacked* my argument.
- It is just their *strategy* to *defend* their argument.

THEORY IS BUILDING
- The theory is *well-constructed*.
- Here is the *foundation* of the well-known theory.

IDEA IS FOOD
- The idea is *half-baked*.
- We still need to *digest* the idea.

The above examples elucidate that typically, an argument is compared to a war; a theory is likened to a building; and an idea is pictured food. Conclusively, every metaphorical expression has a set of mappings as its "soul".

As conceptual domains from which metaphorical expressions are drawn, source domains are typically more concrete or easier to recognize than target domains (Kovecses, 2010). In fact, empirically, it is easier for us to recognize war than argument, building than theory, food than idea, plant than company, etc. Simply, the source domain of a metaphor is usually what we are more familiar with in our daily life.

Some metaphors provide the target with a relatively rich source. Those metaphors, which CMT calls structural metaphors, typically have a definite source domain such as the human

body, game, building, plant, animal, water, war, food, etc. In some cases, a structural metaphor is entrenched through exploitation of an element of its source domain as seen below.

COMPANY IS PLANT
- The *branch* office has sent the annual report.
- The company is *growing*.
- They believe that the business will soon *bloom*.
- The company *reaped* a big benefit from the global crisis.

As we have seen, the elements of plants are exploited to construct the metaphorical expressions. It is so obvious that the metaphorical expressions have a set of mappings; a) the whole plant is the entire organization, b) a part of the plant is a part of the organization, c) growth of plant is progress of the company, d) the flowering is the most successful stage, and e) the fruit is the beneficial result.

In many cases, a metaphor provides its target with a less rich source. CMT classifies such a metaphor as an ontological metaphor. As a matter of fact, in an ontological metaphor, the target is merely given a new ontological status. Typically, an ontological metaphor has an indefinite object, container or substance as its source domain (Kovecses, 2010) as seen below.

PAIN IS AN OBJECT
- We *saw* the pain on his face.
- The pain has *turned* her into a moody one.

BUSINESS IS A CONTAINER
- Just stay *out of* the business.
- Mary got *into* the frozen food business when she was 32.

FEELING IS A SUBSTANCE
- I think her dislikes will *fade* away gradually.
- Our anger *melted* when seeing the truth.

The above examples simply show us that in ontological metaphors, the target is only fancied as an indefinite object, container or substance. Accordingly, it can be inferred that the cognitive function of an ontological metaphor is to merely help us understand the target simply by regarding it as something concrete.

CMT also proposes that some metaphors apply basic human spatial orientations such as up-down and center-periphery. Considering the characteristics, CMT calls them orientational metaphors.

MORE IS UP; LESS IS DOWN
- Speak *up*, please.
- The tax rate must be *upped* once again.
- Keep your voice *down*.
- The price will not come *down* until next month.

It is so obvious that the above metaphors are characterized by "upward" and "downward" orientation. The same case can be found in many common expressions such as he *fell* ill and she *rose* from the dead (SICK IS DOWN; HEALTHY IS UP), we are feeling *up* today and they are *low* these days (HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN), etc.

2. Metaphorical Teacher Talk

How can a teacher talk metaphorically? Apparently, there are at least two answers to the question. Firstly, not all ideas, as proposed by CMT, can be expressed through literal language, and secondly, the teacher intends to provide the class with some figurative talk, which, as claimed by Ottati and Renstrom (2010), is more effective than literal ones in conveying messages and grabbing attentions. While the first answer sounds quite normative (it is just to confirm CMT's idea of how a metaphor occurs naturally in daily communication), the second seems to go with a number of findings revealing positive contributions of metaphorical teacher talks towards the learning process in the EFL classroom.

Thu (2019) found that teacher's metaphorical instructions help students improve their writing skills, and previously, Paulson and Theado (2015) discovered that teacher's metaphorical talks can make new and unfamiliar concepts more meaningful to students. The findings seem to imply that a metaphorical talk can be an effective tool that a teacher can use to facilitate skill and knowledge acquisition process in the classroom.

3. Gender Differences in Language Use

Although gender is often associated with sex, the two terms refer to different ideas. In sex, men and women are biological categories, meanwhile, in gender, men and women are social categories Coming from genus, a Latin word, gender is widely understood as characteristics stuck on men and women; it deals with a set of attitudes, roles, responsibilities, rights and behaviors constructed socially and culturally (Barnett et al., 2021).

Theories of gender propose some differences between men and women in social function, and the differences seem to have influenced the way they use language in communication. Men are more "straight to the point" and tend to use simpler words, while women are more expressive and careful in describing their ideas (Barnet et al., 2021). In interactive communications, men typically speak more than women in formal situation, tend to let women dominate conversation in informal situation, and have the initiative in interaction.

METHOD

The research employed a case study design and was conducted at a state university in Makassar, Indonesia. Two EFL lecturers (one male and one female) were chosen as the subjects for their metaphorical talks in the classroom interactions with the students. The data were obtained through classroom observation, which involved recording the classroom teaching and learning process, and semi-structured interviews with both the lecturers and students.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Overall, the subjects' use of metaphorical talks in the classroom interactions with the students is mainly due to their teaching style, which emphasizes the importance of attractive talks as the effort to grab the students' full attention. This seems to confirm Ottati and Renstrom's (2010) idea about the effectiveness of using metaphors. Yet, it is important to highlight that on certain occasions in the EFL classroom, the lecturers' use of metaphorical talks seems to be caused by their inability to find literal expressions for their ideas, which merely confirms Lakoff and Johnsen's (2003) claim that metaphors are often unavoidable in our daily communication. Conclusively, there is no significant difference between the male and female

lecturer in metaphor use motives. The metaphorical talks used by both parties just "flow like a river" in the classroom interactions with the students; they tend to be just natural expressions used by lecturers to describe their ideas.

Gender Influence on Metaphor Constructions

The subjects' metaphorical talks occur in various situational contexts in the EFL classrooms. The male lecturer goes metaphorical in the context of giving suggestion (*if you understand give a thumb up)*, joking (*beautify the network through plastic surgery)*, giving explanation (... *"be" or "to be" often comes up side by side with a pronoun)*, giving direction (... *the question will be scrambled for each person)*, material introduction (... *as the bridge of our introduction)*, giving thanks (*Thanks for your sweet concern)*, expressing emotion (*your question cracks my mood* and *it can make you melt like ice)*, giving encouragement (... *it is time for you to build up your vocabulary)*, providing information (*the meeting is ready so please order* and *I cut the access)*, showing care (*I'm trying to make up your emotion up)*, providing feedback (*make it more mature, don't bring a false hope*, and *it needs hard work)*, and giving question (*have you lost your hope?)*. Meanwhile, the female lecturer's metaphorical talks occur in the context of giving suggestion (*don't fight back if your analysis is not mature; it would be a blunder* and *detect the sources, analyze and then connect it to the fact)*, joking (... *senior rhetorical victim)*, giving explanation (...*don't get caught up in the global scenario under the guise of feminism and emancipation while the substance is just the opposite* and *the number 1-24* are safe), giving direction (*don't directly get ingested by dogma)*, sharing opinion (... *the invention method is weak or a global conspiracy that is thirsty for power...*, *that movie is beyond my expectation*, and ...*this one creeps me out)*, giving information (*The quiz is almost out of time)*, expressing shock (... *a sharp analysis* and *it is a daytime dream)*, providing feedback (... *an object to fight...)*, and emphasizing statement (*it could be detected by the global agent)*. The metaphorical talks used by the male and female lecturers are mapped as follows.

Table 1. *Mappings of Male Lecturer's Metaphorical Talks*

No.	Metaphorical Talks	Mappings
1.	*Beautify the network through plastic surgery.*	NETWORK IS THE HUMAN BODY
2.	*"Be" or "to be" often comes up side by side with a pronoun.*	SENTENCE IS ROW
3.	*The questions will be scrambled for each person.*	QUESTION IS INDEFINITE OBJECT
4.	*... as the bridge of our introduction.*	INTRODUCTION IS BUILDING
5.	*Thanks for your sweet concern.*	CONCERN IS FOOD
6.	*Your question cracks my mood.*	QUESTION IS INDEFINITE OBJECT
7.	*It can make you melt like ice.*	PERSON IS ICE
8.	*It is time for you to build up your vocabulary.*	VOCABULARY IS BUILDING
9.	*The meeting is ready, so please order.*	MEETING IS PRODUCT
10.	*I cut the access.*	ACCESS IS INDEFINITE OBJECT
11.	*I am just trying to make your emotion up.*	EMOTION IS INDEFINITE OBJECT
12.	*Make it more mature.*	IDEA IS HUMAN
13.	*Don't bring a false hope.*	HOPE IS INDEFINITE OBJECT
14.	*It needs hard work.*	WORK IS INDEFINITE OBJECT
15.	*Have you lost your hope?*	HOPE IS PROPERTY

Table 2. *Mappings of Female Lecturer's Metaphorical Talks*

No.	Metaphorical Talks	Mappings
1.	*Don't fight back if your analysis is not mature.*	ARGUMENT IS WAR; ANALYSIS IS HUMAN
2.	*Detect the source, analyze and then connect it to the fact.*	LITERATURE AND FACT ARE INDEFINITE OBJECT
3.	*... senior rhetorical victim.*	RHETORIC IS HUMAN
4.	*...don't get caught up in the global scenario under the guise of feminism and emancipation while the substance is just the opposite*	SCENARIO IS CONTAINER; FEMINISM AND EMANCIPATION ARE HUMAN
5.	*Number one to twenty-four are safe.*	QUESTION IS INDEFINITE OBJECT
6.	*Don't directly get ingested by dogma.*	HUMAN ARE FOOD
7.	*Naruto is as cool as me.*	FICTION IS REAL LIFE
9.	*The invention method is weak, or a global conspiracy that is thirsty for power...,*	METHOD IS INDEFINITE OBJECT; POWER IS WATER
10.	*That movie is beyond my expectation.*	MOVIE IS INDEFINITE OBJECT; EXPECTATION IS LINE
11.	*This one creeps me out.*	IDEA IS INDEFINITE OBJECT
12.	*The quiz is almost out of time.*	QUIZ IS INDEFINITE OBJECT; TIME IS CONTAINER
13.	*... a sharp analysis.*	ANALYSIS IS KNIFE
14.	*It is a daytime dream.*	HAPPENING IS DREAM
15.	*... an object to fight.*	OBJECT IS HUMAN
16.	*It could be detected by a global agent.*	AGENT IS TOOL

The male lecturer's metaphorical talks are constructed through the exploitations of 9 source domains; the human body, row, indefinite object, building, food, ice, product, human and property. Meanwhile, the female lecturer's metaphorical talks are entrenched through the utilizations of 11 source domains; war, human, indefinite object, container, food, real character, water, line, knife, dream and tool. From here, it can simply be seen that the female lecturer exploits more source domains than does the male.

Table 3. Source Domains of Metaphorical Talks Used by Male and Female Lecturer

No.	Source Domains	Male Lecturer	Female Lecturer
1.	The Human Body	√	-
2.	Row	√	-
3.	Indefinite Object	√	√
4.	Building	√	-
5.	Food	-	√
6.	Ice	√	-
7.	Product	√	-
8.	Property	√	-
9.	Human	√	√
10.	War	-	√
11.	Container	-	√
12.	Real Life	-	√
13.	Water	-	√
14.	Line	-	√

No.	Source Domains	Male Lecturer	Female Lecturer
15.	Dream	-	√
16.	Tool	-	√

There are 2 source domains used by both the male and female lecturer; indefinite object and the human body, 6 only used by the male; the human body, row, building, ice and property, and 8 only used by the female; food, war, container, real life, water, line, dream and tool. None of the source domains listed above seems so special; those source domains are familiar concepts in our life. In fact, in general either men or women have those concepts in their empirical knowledge. However, the above findings lead us to apprehend that in constructing metaphorical talks in the classroom interaction with the students, the female lecturer, as indicated by the number of source domains she uses, which is bigger than that the male uses, can exploit her empirical knowledge better than the male. The female lecturer's better ability can also be seen in her exploitation of the concept of war; although the concept of war empirically sounds quite masculine, the female lecturer can exploit it for *don't fight back*, signaling her good understanding of what men (should) know better.

Another imperative point to be highlighted here is that in general, the female lecturer's metaphorical talks are more complex than the male lecturers. As seen in Table 1 and 2, while every metaphorical talk provided by the male lecturer only has a single mapping, some of the metaphorical talks used by the female have double mappings (ARGUMENT IS WAR; ANALYSIS IS HUMAN, SCENARIO IS CONTAINER; FEMINISM AND EMANCIPATION ARE HUMAN, METHOD IS INDEFINITE OBJECT; POWER IS WATER, MOVIE IS INDEFINITE OBJECT; EXPECTATION IS LINE, and QUIZ IS INDEFINITE OBJECT; TIME IS CONTAINER). Accordingly, it can be inferred that in general the female lecturer's metaphorical talks are more structural than the male lecturer's, implying that the female lecturer has more critical thinking than the male.
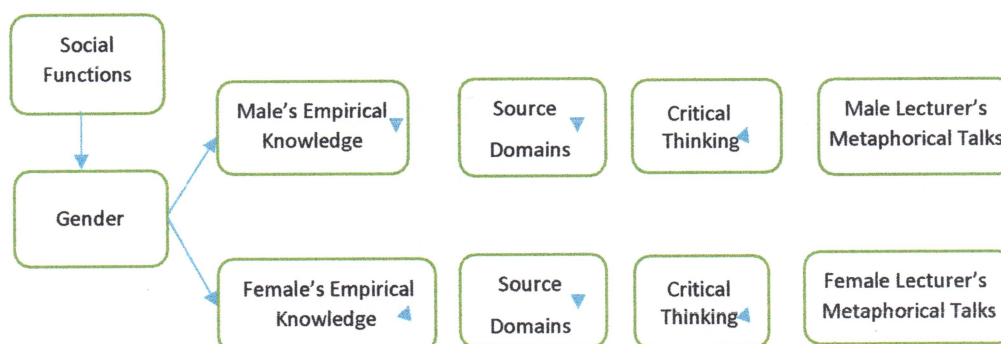
Picture 1. *Gender Influence on Lecturer's Metaphorical Talks in EFL Classroom*

In common, either men or women have their own social functions, leading to some difference between them in social experience, and what happens next is that they have different empirical knowledge and life views (Barnet et al., 2021). Afterwards, the different empirical knowledge, as illustrated by Picture 1, leads to some difference between them in metaphorical talk construction. Further, Picture 1 emphasizes that the difference between the male and female lecturer in constructing metaphorical talks in the classroom interaction with the students is due to not only

their difference in empirical knowledge but also critical thinking factor. As elucidated by the findings, the female lecturer has more critical thinking, leading to her more complex metaphorical talks in the EFL classroom.

Contribution towards the Learning Process

The first point to be highlighted in the students' perception is that the metaphorical talks used by the lecturers in the EFL classroom are such "candies", attractive talks coloring the learning process, which seem to just confirm Ottati and Renstrom's (2010) notion that a metaphor is a rhetorical tool used for attention grabbing. Yet, there is absolutely no way to underestimate the figurative talks since they seem to contribute towards the classroom atmosphere. In fact, theoretically and practically, a metaphorical talk typically has some aesthetic value.

The second point in the students' perception is that the metaphorical talks lead them to analyze and apprehend certain ideas shared by the lecturers in the EFL classroom. Accordingly, it can simply be claimed that the lecturers' metaphorical talks contribute towards the knowledge acquisition process occurring in the EFL classroom. Conclusively, the findings seem to be in line with Lakoff and Johnsen's (2003) and Kovecses' (2010) proposal that metaphors are essentially cognitive processes of understanding ideas deeply and comprehensively, particularly those that are abstract concepts.

CONCLUSIONS

Having different social functions, men and women – as implied by the research findings – seem to have not only different empirical knowledge but also different levels of critical thinking. Accordingly, it can be claimed that gender influence on metaphor constructions actually occurs because of two factors; empirical knowledge, which is gained from social experiences, and level of critical thinking.

The students' positive perception obviously implies that the lecturers' use of metaphorical talks is something positive to the learning process in the EFL classroom. Although the metaphorical talks do not directly affect the students' English language skills acquisition, which is essentially the goal of the learning process, those figurative expressions cannot be underrated since they are such a contribution to the student's learning enthusiasm and knowledge acquisition. Hence, the ability to generate metaphorical talks effectively seems to be one of the must-have things to EFL teachers. That the findings stand at the female's side seem to imply that in constructing metaphorical talks in the classroom interactions with students, male teachers should be "more female", which is more critical, in exploiting empirical knowledge.

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