Examining English Language Learners' Conception Through Conceptual Metaphor Production

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Abstract: *Speaking skill is one of the important skills in English language learning; nevertheless, the students' conception in learning speaking is different from one student to another. Knowing students' conception will provide teacher/lecturer an input on how the to improve the teaching strategy especially on speaking skills. This paper analyses the students' conception of learning speaking skill by examining the source domain of the metaphor they produce. The aims are to identify the underlying concept, as this will provide an access to students' conception and will be a valuable input for the lecturers; this is also to promote the conceptual metaphor framework in pedagogical context, The study is qualitative by identifying the source domain of the metaphorical expressions and analysing the underlying concept of metaphorical expressions produced by students as participants of this study. There are 15 students as participants of this study, and are given an open-ended questionnaire that is developed based on previous studies. To give students' a general idea on producing metaphorical expressions, the brief explanation on conceptual metaphor theory to explicitly introduce the source domain and target domain concept is given before questionnaires are distributed. Our examination to the metaphorical expressions produced by students' shows that the students' conceptualized learning speaking as something which need extra effort, the necessity for more practice, an important language skills, and the need for variation in learning it. Apart from those conceptions, there are also metaphorical expressions which reveal that students find the speaking learning process is fun.*

Keywords: *Speaking Learning, Conception, Conceptual Metaphor, Source Domain*

Abstrak: Keterampilan berbicara adalah salah satu keterampilan penting dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Namun demikian, konsepsi siswa dalam ketrampilan berbicara berbeda antara siswa yang satu dengan yang lain. Mengetahui konsepsi siswa akan memberikan guru / dosen masukan tentang bagaimana meningkatkan strategi pengajaran terutama pada keterampilan berbicara. Makalah ini menganalisis konsepsi siswa tentang belajar keterampilan berbicara dengan memeriksa domain sumber dari metafora yang mereka hasilkan. Tujuannya adalah untuk mengidentifikasi konsep yang mendasarinya, karena ini akan memberikan akses ke konsepsi mahasiswa dan akan menjadi masukan yang berharga bagi para dosen; ini juga untuk mempromosikan kerangka metafora konseptual dalam konteks pedagogis. Penelitian ini bersifat kualitatif dengan mengidentifikasi sumber domain dari ekspresi metaforis dan menganalisis konsep yang mendasari ekspresi metaforis yang dihasilkan oleh siswa sebagai peserta penelitian ini. Ada 15 siswa sebagai peserta penelitian ini, dan diberikan kuesioner terbuka yang dikembangkan berdasarkan studi sebelumnya. Untuk memberikan siswa ide umum tentang menghasilkan ekspresi metaforis, penjelasan singkat tentang teori metafora konseptual untuk secara eksplisit memperkenalkan domain sumber dan konsep domain target diberikan sebelum kuesioner didistribusikan. Pemeriksaan kami terhadap ekspresi metaforis yang dihasilkan oleh siswa 'menunjukkan bahwa siswa yang dikonseptualisasikan belajar berbicara sebagai sesuatu yang membutuhkan usaha ekstra, perlunya lebih banyak latihan, keterampilan bahasa yang penting, dan kebutuhan akan variasi dalam mempelajarinya. Terlepas dari konsepsi itu, ada juga ungkapan metaforis yang mengungkapkan bahwa siswa merasa proses belajar berbicara itu menyenangkan.

Kata kunci: Ketrampilan Berbicara, Konsepsi, Metafora Konseptual, Domain Sumber

1. INTRODUCTION

Writers' experience as ESL lecturer finds that speaking skill is one of the most challenging skills for students to learn and to practice. The hesitation and the challenging aspect of learning the skill is one of them triggered by their conception and attitude towards the learning process particularly the view and conception to speaking skill and its learning process.

A summary of students' conception with an accessible concrete image will give lecturer a vivid picture of how students perceive the speaking skill itself, and to have that explicitly stated, conceptual metaphor is one of the framework that can be used.

This paper aims to identify the underlying concept and attitude of students toward learning speaking by using conceptual metaphor approach where students are asked to provide their opinion on speaking learning using metaphorical expressions. This will be a valuable input for the lecturers to enable lecturer to improve and develop a better approach in speaking learning. This paper also aims to promote the conceptual metaphor framework in pedagogical context, as it can be broaden to have students' conception on particular aspect of learning and also conception to teacher or lecturer. MacArthur (2010) suggests that the creative production of metaphoric and metonymic expression canprovide essential insights into EFL learners' competencies.

This study is different from several previous studies in terms of the focus of conception, as most of several previous studies are focus on the conception to teachers/educators, as also affirmed by Nikitina and Furuoka (2008) that the analysis of learners' beliefs on English language learning process has not received much attention in language teaching and learning context by the researchers in conceptual metaphor framework.

There are several previous studies on the application of conceptual metaphor framework in educational context. Pishghadam (2011) explores the metaphors produced students have on language teachers, the results of the study shows that students generally perceived their failures in learning to classroom behaviour, whereas students of non-profit schools perceive their success to the cognitive-related learning.

Another study which focus on the learning English conception is of Bas and Gezegin (2015) that analyses students' metaphorical perceptions of English learning process and find that students consider language learning to be an effortful and continuous process which requires support. Moreover, while some metaphors are similar to those observed in other studies, some others are highly culture-specific.

Whereas Kitikanan (2010) who studies metaphorical conceptualizations of English classes by comparing non-English first-year Thai EFL and Filipino ESL students shows that both Thai and Filipino students expressed both negative and positive concepts about English classes. The Thai students conceptualized the English classes as weapons (e.g. sword, weapon, Ninja weapon), beneficial things (e.g. food, rice, breakfast, air, water, tree, sun, money, jewel), dangerous things (e.g. ghost, poison, thorn, black forest), places (e.g. empty room, cave), and commodities (e.g. mirror, frame), whereas the Filipino students conceptualized the English classes as beneficial things (e.g. computer, spare key, sharpener, pen, basketball, Rubik's cube, book, door, bridge, food, water) and animals (e.g. pig). The factors influencing the differences between the two groups of students were educational background, current educational system and socio-cultural factors.

In this paper, writers focus on conception of speaking skill and learning, as it will directly provide an access to students' mental image of the issue, therefore, the finding will be valuable input for writers to improve speaking learning process.

2. LITERARY REVIEW

The emergence of cognitive view in metaphor has brought an extensive research in conceptual metaphor framework, the sub section below provide a brief summary of the framework and how the conceptual metaphor framework has been widely used in educational context.

2.1. Conceptual Metaphor Framework

The traditional view of metaphor considers metaphor as a poetic device, since the emergence of cognitive linguistics, metaphor is viewed as an integral part of everyday utterance, where the utterance produced is the reflects speaker's conception towards world around them including in metaphor, which from cognitive linguistic perspective, is produced in mental domain, not in linguistics level domain.

The view that human thought affects the metaphorical thinking either in production and interpretation of metaphor has given birth to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which was first time advocated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson on his publication *Metaphor We Live By* (1980). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) assure that metaphor as something that is not merely speaking or thinking about something in terms of something else, but actually experiencing something as something else.

In this theory, mapping is a set of systematic conceptual correspondences between the source and the target in the sense that constituent conceptual elements of b correspond to constituent elements of a. (Kovecses 2010, p.7)

Kovecsec (2010) provides a conceptual mapping of LOVE is JOURNEY (in CMT, the capital letter is used to state the conceptual level TARGET DOMAIN is SOURCE DOMAIN) metaphor, where the source domain and target domain is written in capital to represent the cognitive level framework.

Source Domain: JOURNEY		*Target Domain: LOVE*
the travelers	→	the lovers
the vehicle	→	the love relationship itself
the journey	→	events in the relationship
the distance covered	→	the progress made
the obstacles encountered	→	the difficulties experienced
decisions about which way to go	→	choices about what to do
the destination of the journey	→	the goal(s) of the relationship

An English native speaker is able to produce the metaphorical linguistic expression in conceptual mapping LOVE is JOURNEY since the preexisting experience and similarities between those two domains. The speakers rely on their knowledge and experience on one concept in order to understand another concept. Therefore, one conceptual metaphor is formed by two conceptual domains (Kovecses, 2010) and the speakers try to understand the target domain by the use of the source domain, for example, we do not talk about *journey* in terms of *love*. Thus, when a person speaks metaphorically to his/her partner: *We can't turn back now, we're at a crossroads, we may have to go our separate ways, the relationship isn't going anywhere*, the conceptual domain that underlying those metaphorical expressions is of journey. Thus, the speaker conceptualizes love in terms of journey. The mapping of those metaphorical expressions above is LOVE is JOURNEY.

The birth of CMT has brought the study of metaphor in various discourse including in politic, economic, and other types of discourse, including one of them is in educational context.

2.2. Conceptual metaphor to explore students' conception

Kövecses (2003) affirms that one of composition of components that interact in metaphor is the experiential basis that motivates the choice of particular sources to map into particular targets and further suggests that there are an entailments or inferences in a conceptual metaphor that is produced.

Cameron and Low (1999) agrees that in studies that explore learner beliefs, metaphor analysis has become an accepted and invaluable tool in educational and applied linguistic inquiry.

Writers use metaphors to analyze aspects of the subconscious, including implicit beliefs. As it is pervasive in everyday language, metaphors are useful tools to reflect these beliefs and to raise awareness for the educators. Within conceptual metaphor framework, this paper analyzes the conceptions of a group of EFL learners on their language learning process particularly in learning speaking based on the basic principles of the cognitive theory of metaphor proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

Cameron (2003) suggest that metaphors of language learners may help teachers to develop professionalism by revealing students' experiences of language learning activities and situations, and the pioneering study that provides a metaphorical taxonomy to describe the teaching process and the nature of language teacher roles within four philosophies of education is of Oxford et al. (1998), namely: social order, cultural transmission, learner-centered growth, and social reform

These studies employs, as a conceptual framework, and analyze the metaphorical expressions produced by students to identify the source domain used, and to further analyze the highlighted aspect of the source domain which can implicitly reveal students' conception of learning speaking.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in the Foreign Language Academy Balikpapan. There are twenty participants' ages ranged between 19 and 33 all Indonesian native speakers and English as Second language learners. Data were collected through a metaphor elicitation sheet prepared by the writers based on previous studies (Sabanet.al., 2006) with a modification to meet the research objective. First, brief information was given to familiarize the students with the concept of metaphor and the conceptual framework of metaphor. During this introductory session, the students were first presented with a general definition and description of the concept of metaphor followed by examples and excerpts (e. live is a journey). As the next step, the metaphor elicitation sheets were distributed (see Appendix-A).

"Learning speaking is (like) ... because ...." The follow up question "because" is needed to have the highlighted aspect that followed when student use particular source domain, since it is possible that different students use the same source domain but focus on different aspect of it.

The metaphor analysis methodology employed by Saban, Koçbeker and Saban(2006) was adopted in the study. The steps followed for data analysis are:
- listing the collected linguistic metaphors
- identifying main categories of metaphors in accordance
- constructing conceptual themes based on the main categories identified (e.g. Riding Bike, Riding Roller Coaster, Drinking/Eating, etc.),

- grouping the metaphors under main themes, and
- Establishing inter-rater reliability. In order to ensure inter-rater reliability,

Writers established inter-rater mechanism by review the domains and categories separately first and discussed the result. In addition, the metaphors were explained with reference to the entailments they include in order to reveal the participants' conceptualizations underlying the metaphors.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

From twenty students as participants, one data is omitted as the expression produces is not metaphorical, whereas the other nineteen participants produce metaphorical expressions about speaking skill including the learning activity related to the skill.

There are various aspects revealed from students' metaphorical expressions. The sub section of finding is presented based on the view of the students to the learning skill and its learning and to describe the metaphorical expressions that are used by students.

4.1. *Speaking English requires necessity to regular practice.*

There are two students that focus on the necessity of practice the skill to be able to master it. Nevertheless, there are variation in conceptualising it, one student compare it with eating and drinking as seen below:

P#5:
"Speaking is like eating and drinking
because
that is a necessary to do every time".

The use of eating and drinking as comparison, suggest that the student view practicing the skill as a must in learning speaking and as an activity that should be done regularly. This conception is a positive in terms of the awareness of the student that learning the skill require a regular and continuous practice.

Whereas the necessity of practice also described by participant P#6 in a different metaphorical expression as below:

P#6
"Speaking is like a baby learns to walk
Because
you won't nail it unless you practice"

Although the conception of speaking as an activity which require practice, but the use of the comparison like a baby learns to walk focus on the need of more practice to be eventually able to perform the activity fluently.

The use of the different personal conception or concrete domain to refer to the same abstract domain (speaking skill) is one of them influenced by the personal experience and knowledge, as Kovecses (2003) affirms that personal experience and knowledge plays an important role in mapping of target domain to source domain.

Both of the metaphorical expressions above that express the necessity to practice the skills provide a vivid image of how important the practice and the frequency of the practice from the participants. This is then become a valuable input for lecturer to maintain the awareness and to assist student to be able to practice the speaking.

4.2. Speaking English Needs Extra Effort to fight fear and nervousness

Students' conception of speaking skill as an activity which need extra efforts is captured in students' metaphorical expression, and although the speaking skill as abstract domain is the same, there are differences among students in expressing the level of effort as seen below :

P#1

"Speaking is like riding (a) bicycle
Because
you have to paddle and get focus continuously to keep moving forward and avoid some crash"

In data above student expresses the extra effort needed in learning and practicing speaking as riding a bicycle in a way that focus is needed and need to avoid crash which could be compare with the need to be always pay attention to what need to be spoken and how it should be spoken.

Whereas in expression P#10 below, the extra effort needed is to defeat own fear in speaking especially in public. What interesting is that the student use battle war as the source domain of the metaphor, it describes the level of effort needed in encouraging him/herself to be able to speak.

P#10

"Speaking is like
Battle war
Because
we have to defeat our own fear in expressing our idea in front of many people"

The different focus of efforts needed from two metaphorical expressions above comes from a different source domain, in P#1, where the student uses the source domain of riding a bike, is most likely triggered by personal experience and knowledge, but focusing on the effort needed in maintaining the smooth riding. Whereas in P#10, the student uses the source domain battle war, which is most likely not triggered by personal experience, but personal knowledge and perception on how a battle war is.

4.3. Speaking English is Fun

Speaking English is a fun activity is also captured from student's metaphorical expressions, and there are various source domains to express that as seen from the finding below:

P#4

"Speaking is like
Riding a bike
It feels easy, and turns out that learning speaking are quiet easy and fun too"

The student's experience of riding a bike as an easy and fun activity is used to compare the speaking activity with. Although riding a bike at beginning used a lot of effort to be a good rider, but that aspect is not highlighted by the student in P#4, instead the aspect of fun is highlighted. Still, the entailment that follows is that the student in P#4 has been through the process of learning.

Drinking a cup of tea as a source domain in expressing the speaking learning is used by student in P#8, where the amazing and good feeling of drinking tea is used as a comparison.

P#8

"Speaking is like
My cup of tea

Because
it is very amazing feeling while learning"

The experience of riding roller coaster is also used by student to express the speaking learning experience, but different from the use of the same source domain of roller coaster in P#15 which highlight in fighting against fear, the metaphorical expression in P#14 highlights the joyful feeling in riding a roller coaster as seen below:

P#14
"Speaking is like
Riding a roller coaster
Because
It is Fun"

Again, the personal experience plays an important role in triggering not only the source domain used, but also which aspect that need to be highlighted and which aspect that is omitted.

4.4. Mistakes are made , therefore need to be brave and confident in speaking English

Another aspect of learning speaking that appear from students' conception using metaphor is their focus on fighting against fear to speak in English and to gain confidence as seen from metaphors below:

P#13
Speaking is like
"Learning to ride a bike"
Because
because one has to make enough mistakes(fall) to be fluent or expert.
Speaking English is important to master

Student P#13 describes the speaking as riding a bike, but instead of focusing on the joyful aspect of riding a bike, the student in P#13 focuses on the challenging aspect when a person is at initial stage of leaning to ride a bike, where sometimes fall. Therefore, there is an encouragement that mistake is made, but to be fluent, it needs to be strong enough.

This metaphor shows an entailment that a learner of course will go through a process where mistake is made but more and more practice will help the learner to be a fluent speaker.

The similar metaphor is seen in P#15 below, by using the source domain of riding a roller coaster, but is not highlighting the joyful feeling; instead it highlights the need to be brave when riding a roller coaster.

P#15
Speaking is like
Riding a roller coaster
Because
because we need to be brave to talk in front of other people.

The student in P#15 has a different aspect to highlight when using the source domain of riding a roller coaster to speak about learning speaking. Different from student in P#14 which used roller coaster domain and focus on the joyful aspect, student P#15 is more focus on to fight the fear and it means that in speaking, the learner should fight the fear to speak.

A unique source domain is seen from the P#17 below, where the student compare speaking as a relationship:

P#17

"Speaking is like
when you learn about someone that you like
because
When you have more knowledge and experience about that person you'll be more confident to
chase it while in speaking English more you learn it you'll have more experience and
knowledge that can help you to be more confident to show it"

4.5. Variation in learning speaking

Apart from those conceptions above, variation in learning the skill is important to address by a student as seen below by comparing learning speaking as a diet which need a variation.
P#7:

Speaking is
"The same as our diet"
Because
"if we only eat basic food and are not balanced with fruits/vegetables then we will lack
essential nutrients to grow".

From the metaphorical expression above where student compare a variation of learning as a diet which need to be various and not monotonous, to express the need of variation in learning speaking and using the source domain of "diet" is very creative and provide a vivid mental image of how important the variation in learning speaking to the success of the learning.

The entailment and inferences of having the variation in diet above implied that there should be a balance in supplies so that the body will have a fit and a healthy condition which can be conceptualized as the success in learning speaking, and another entailment is that if there is no variation, a person might probably fed well with basic meal, but will not be healthy enough, which mapped into the speaking learning domain, means that a learner needs variations in learning to master all aspects in speaking.

4.6. Speaking is important as a means of expressions

The metaphorical expressions below focus on the importance of speaking as an instrument of communication and a means of expressing self.
P#12
"Speaking is like breathing the air
Because
There are many, many reasons why learning a new language is a good idea. It allows you to
communicate with new people. It helps you to see things from a different perspective, or get a
deeper understanding of another culture. It helps you to become a better listener. It even has
health benefits, as studies have shown that people who speak two or more languages have
more active minds later in life!"

In P#12 above, the comparison of speaking is like breathing the air provides a conception on the importance of the speaking. But the focus is not on the process of learning, but it is on the function of speaking as a communication process. Student in P#12 above express the awareness on the important aspect of speaking activity in communication as an essential aspect as it is a way to have a broader view onto another culture.

The creative way to express the essential function of speaking in communication is seen in P#16 below, where lyrics and melody is used to metaphorically express the material with a speech.
P#16

"Speaking is like lyrics and melody
Because
we are required to express ourselves when explaining a material with speech"

The creative metaphor in P#16 above is a personally bound metaphor, where the personal experience of the student makes her able to produce a creative metaphor.

The various source domains and categories found in the metaphorical expressions used by the students to express learning speaking proof that they can use their personal experience and knowledge to conceptualize the target domain speaking.

4.7. The Different Conception Within The Same Source.

One of the most interesting facts from the finding is that students creatively employ their personal experience of various concrete concepts to metaphorically express the speaking skill. An example is "riding a bicycle" domain. Student P#4 express the compare learning speaking as riding a bicycle because it is a fun activity, but P#1 compares learning speaking as riding a bicycle because it needs an effort to avoid crash, whereas P#13 compare learning speaking as riding a bicycle because rider might fall which means mistake are made, but need to keep trying.

This conceptualisation triggered by personal experience of each student about their experience and knowledge on bicycle riding activity. The different focus of conception and focus will be valuable for instructors to pay attention on the specific aspect of each student's conception.

The same case to the use of roller coaster as source domain, where P#14 use roller coaster as a fun activity whereas P#15 focuses on the need to be brave during riding a roller coaster. This different conceptualisations which trigger the creative metaphor production is a proof that each individual will perceived an event differently and will focus on a different aspect of it.

5. CONCLUSION

The study reveals the conception of students towards the speaking skill and its learning process shows that the students' conceptualized learning speaking as something which need extra effort, the necessity for more practice, an important language skills, and the need for variation in learning it. Apart from those conceptions, there are also metaphorical expressions which reveal that students find the speaking learning process is fun and need to put extra effort and to be brave to fight nervousness.

The variations of metaphorical expressions produced by students provide the different focus in speaking learning aspect and provide a descriptive picture of how student's conception in learning speaking, thus, English teacher or lecturer will use this valuable input in improving the teaching of speaking.

This study is conducted as preliminary study to promote the use of conceptual metaphor in educational context, therefore, further study should be conducted on –for instance- whether male and female students have a different characteristic in using particular source domain and it can also be used in other language learning skill conception.

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APPENDIX-A

The questionnaire

Metaphor Survey

Age   :
Gender   :
Semester   :

Please think of a metaphor and complete the sentences below.
You need to explain why you choose specific metaphor after 'because.'

Learning English Speaking is (like…)

Because….

APPENDIX-B

No	Age	Gender	Speaking is like	Because
			DATA DISPLAY	
P#1	27	Female	riding bicycle	you have to paddle and get focus continuously to keep moving forward and avoid some crash.
P#2	25	Female	blow a balloon	you have move out your air to your lung to inside the ballon too
P#3	25	Male	Necessity in learning English skill	english the most commonly spoken language in the world.
P#4	25	Female	Riding a bike	It feels easy, and turns out that learning speaking is quiet easy and fun too
P#5	22	Female	eating and drinking	that is a necessary to do every time
P#6	22	Female	A baby learns to walk	because you wont nail it unless you practice
P#7	21	Female	The same as our diet	if we only eat basic food and are not balanced with fruits/vegetables then we will lack essential nutrients to grow
P#8	20	Female	my cup of tea	it is very amazing feeling while learning
P#9	25	Female	going up to hillside	spoken encodes thought into a physically transmittable form
P#10	27	Male	Battle War	we have to defeat our own fear in expressing our idea in front of many people
P#11	22	Female	water stream	it depends on how fluent the sentences are being spoken
P#12	24	Female	breathing the air	There are many, many reasons why learning a new language is a good idea. It allows you to communicate with new people. It helps you to see things from a different perspective, or get a deeper understanding of another culture. It helps you to become a better listener. It even has health benefits, as studies have shown that people who speak two or more languages have more active minds later in life!
P#13	23	Male	learning to ride a bike	because one has to make enough mistakes(fall) to be fluent or expert.
P#14	22	Female	riding a roller coaster	It is Fun

DATA DISPLAY

No	Age	Gender	Speaking is like	Because
P#15	19	Female	like riding a roller coaster	because we need to be brave to talk in front of other people
P#16	33	Female	like lyrics and melody,	because we are required to express ourselves when explaining a material with speech
P#17	19	Male	like when you learn about someone that you like	When you have more knowledge and experience about that person you'll be more confident to chase it while in speaking English more you learn it you'll have more experience and knowledge that can help you to be more confident to show it.
P#18	19	Female	like making a bomb	because it can brings out something unexpected whether it's thoughts of imagination, ideas,and then creates great discoveries that might never have existed
P#19	19	Female	like playing with fire and water in the same time.	because when we want to say something we have to think about the pros and cons of our words for others.
P#20	19	female	like you talk to your crush	because when you're talking in English, you're going to feel nervous and excited at the same time to say something.