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Metaphorizing Grammar And Writing: Visual Learning In The English Classroom

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METAPHORIZING GRAMMAR AND WRITING:
VISUAL LEARNING IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

BY
KULSOOM F. RIZVI

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING DEGREE AT THE
SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING GRADUATE INSTITUTE,
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IPP ADVISOR: ELKA TODEVA

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This project by Kulsoom F. Rizvi is accepted in its present form.

Date: _____

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ABSTRACT

My goals for this thesis include exploring how metaphors are used in the classroom and, in doing so, providing ways in which to help both teachers and students transcend their understanding. I will: (1) analyze and respond to the research on metaphors in the classroom, (2) illustrate and discuss the rationale of different metaphors I have collected from teachers as well as some I created for the English classroom, and (3) share student generated metaphors in the English classroom.

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(ERIC) DESCRIPTORS

Metaphors in the Classroom
Student Generated Work
Creativity in the Classroom
Visual Learning
Strategies for Teaching Grammar
Strategies for Teaching Writing

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Chapter 1: Introduction

During my first year of teaching in Fall 2005, I went through a phase of Internet obsession. I had stopped watching television entirely and saturated myself in a learning process, using Google searches and educational websites as my medium. I wanted to fully remember what it was like to learn something for the first time, to get something and feel the sense of pride one feels when the mind clicks into focus. I remember thinking how odd it was that I wasn't simply reading and rereading lesson planning books or books on how to be a better teacher. The tone of those books often bothered me. It felt like someone was preaching a philosophy to me, taking away all the magic that came with discovering something for the first time. I realized that there is a skill to teaching, techniques that work very well, and that seasoned teachers know this, but I also felt as though the joy of teaching was in learning with my students, sharing in their discovery, recreating my own discoveries by looking at the material through a different lens, and helping create an environment in which they could discover their own learning. Part of the joy was the creation of a process that led to an "A-ha" moment. I could appreciate the books that shared these A-ha moments, but when a philosophy etched itself into some kind of ethical teaching code, I immediately felt strained, and I realized, too, that when a teacher did this same exact thing to me when I was a student was when I often failed (or sabotaged myself to fail).

However, it would be naïve of me to assume that this is what all students do when the philosophy is too rigid and the manner in which the teacher teaches too black-or-white. I realize that certain students perform well when a teacher's style matches their own way of learning. I do know, though, that we do not live in a world where teachers and students are matched by style and philosophy. Instead we have schools that blend us all together, and I believe that the more

creativity and the more relevance one encounters in a classroom, the more one discovers, not simply about the subject at hand, but about herself. The search for identity plays a large role in life, so why not in teaching and in learning?

This is where metaphors can provide the ultimate force for creation, identity discovering, and connection with the world:

- (1) Creation: For both the teacher and the students, the metaphor-making process is creative and enlightening. It involves taking ordinary objects, mostly tangible (in nature or man-made), and connecting them to more abstract concepts. Creating this connection serves to examine the subject matter closely and brings about a more thorough understanding of a concept. It is a right-brain BRAIN activity that involves a willingness to share.
- (2) Identity-discovering: Since the metaphor-making process involves so much stretching of the imagination and application of what one already knows, it may also shed light on one's passions and interests. My interest in outer space, for instance, prompted me to create a parts of speech analogy to the solar system. Metaphors also reveal cultural undertones. It may serve as a means for students to share their own cultural perspectives.
- (3) Connections: When I discuss the idea of connections, I think of it as a re-discovery process. The known and the unknown need a bridge so that the unknown is not a dark and strange entity, but rather a "knowing" that will be unearthed. Learning something new often involves tapping into what one already knows: "meaningful learning requires that students' existing knowledge be taken into account, not ignored. Conceptual bridges must be

built between existing knowledge and new knowledge; analogy plays an important role in the construction of these bridges” (Glynn 1994) therefore developing this bridge or connections not only helps the learner but also honors what he or she already knows.

Chapter 2: What are Metaphors?

Metaphors as a Literary Device

We were introduced to metaphors at a very young age through literature. Take the popular nursery rhyme “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star”:

Twinkle twinkle little star

How I wonder what you are

Up above the world so high

Like a diamond in the sky

This poem has several literary devices (the apostrophe to the star, the repetition of “twinkle,” the end rhyme, the imagery “up above the world so high”, and the simile likening a star to a diamond). The simile makes a comparison of a star to a diamond based on both objects sparkling. The diamond and the star appear the same way to our eyes. In many English-speaking countries, children grow up making that exact reference to stars repeatedly, albeit on a subconscious level. Things that twinkle conjure stars, diamonds, crystals, and water. Metaphors such as these collect in our minds, and emerge in light conversation and eventually in our written language. When an English teacher finally tells us the definition of a metaphor and have us analyze poetry or prose specifically looking for metaphor, we are not that surprised. We’ve seen them in our lives on many occasions until that point.

A metaphor, plainly put, compares two “seemingly” unlike objects. The similarity is obvious only when the first layer of definition peels off, and we see some kind of similarity underneath. A book cannot be likened to a box, until we realize both open. In the same way,

metaphors allow us the freedom to decide what similarity we chose to focus upon. The process is imaginative and inspired.

Even so, it is important to note that there are variations of what the word actually means. “Metaphor” stems from the Greek *metapherein* – meta meaning “to change” and *pherein* meaning “to bear” (Levine 2005). This carrying of change implies that the object a person pinpoints is actually more than it appears. Its abilities and its potential can be carved and created; the architect of the metaphor has poetic license to determine the change the object will now bear. Perhaps even more compelling is the perception that metaphors “transcend” which primarily means to pass beyond (a human limit), to “exist above and independent of (material experience or the universe)” (Bierschenk and Bierschenk 2002). When an object transcends instead of merely changes, it takes place in an unworldly realm, where imagination finds its resources.

Metaphors as a Teaching Tool

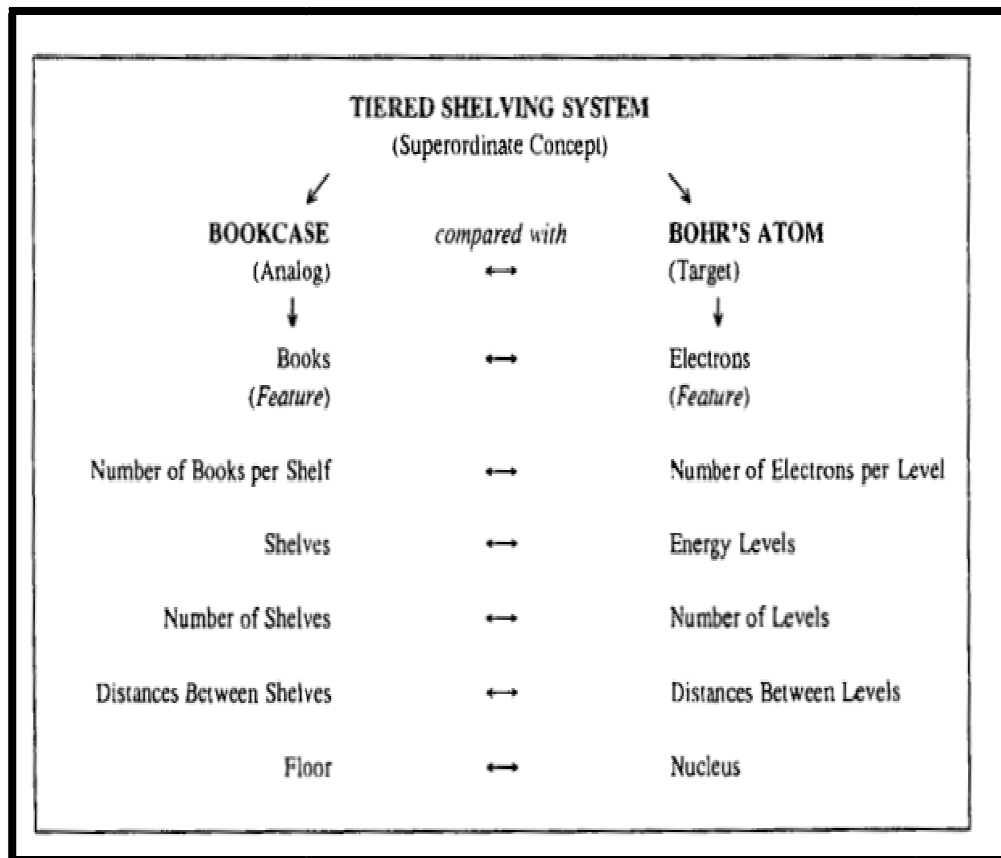
Metaphors have functioned as tools in many classrooms, more dominantly in the mathematics and sciences. Science teachers almost always have to present a new concept to their students using household objects, celestial objects, or objects found in nature. Math teachers will do the same, especially in the higher level courses that integrate both math and science (physics, etc). However, in English classrooms, metaphors are most often only mentioned as devices authors use and seldom used as tools for understanding grammatical or writing concepts. When English teachers use metaphors or analogies in the classroom, they often do so spontaneously and share them informally with other teachers. Essentially, they are not collected or invested in, and often get lost in a sea of teaching strategies.

Metaphors in Math and Science Classrooms

Most metaphors are used in science and mathematics classrooms. They are used in this context more often because “analogies have played an important role in explanation, insight, and discovery throughout the history of science” and “science teachers and textbook authors routinely use analogies to explain complicated concepts to students” (Glynn 1994). In biology, for instance, teachers often “[use] the camera as an analog when teaching about the human eye, because the two concepts have so many similar features” (Ibid). In mathematics, ideas such as functions can be understood through metaphor by its comparison to a “machine that turns one number into another;” for example, “the function $h(t) = 25 - (t - 5)^2$ turns 0 into 0 (which is therefore a fixed point) and 5 into 25. It also turns 10 into 0, so once you have the output you can’t necessarily tell what the input was” (Wells 2009). Once this idea is implanted into the mind of the math student, it acts as an agent of understanding the purpose of a function, not just how to solve one.

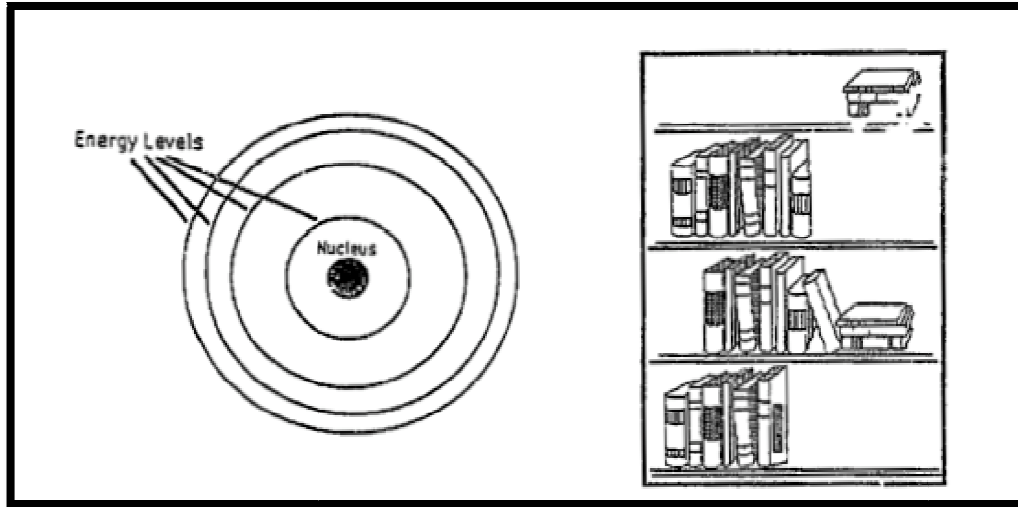
Another popular analogy used in particle physics to describe Bohr’s Atom is the bookcase analogy shown in Figure 1 (Glynn 1994).

Figure 1



Notice how both the components of the analog and the target itself are broken down into easily recognizable parts, so that the understanding of the analogy is relatively seamless. Furthermore, the visual component helps create a more holistic understanding. Figure 2 (Ibid) represents the atom and the bookshelf. This analogy provides an easily recognizable visual (the bookshelf), one in which exists in many homes; so it can work for a variety of students.

Figure 2



In addition, an analogy for the electric circuit takes the understanding of a water circuit and uses it as a solid representation of the aspects that makeup an electric circuit (See Figure 3) (Ibid).

Figure 3

CIRCUIT		
WATER CIRCUIT		ELECTRIC CIRCUIT
water	---	electricity
flowing water	---	electric current
pipes	---	wires
pump	---	battery
pressure	---	voltage
filter	---	poor conductor
reduced flow	---	resistance

More analogies that conjure visuals include the following: bacterial chromosomes are like spaghetti, blood vessels are like highways, the cell is like a factory, DNA is like a spiral staircase, the immune system is like the police force, layers of the earth are like a peach, and

building a protein is like building a house(Herr 2007). These are just a few metaphors; there are many more.

Metaphors in English Classrooms

In the context of teaching writing and grammar, however, the analogies are few and far between. If English teachers use them, they do so spontaneously, using interesting scenarios and verbs to conjure the imagination of their students. I use the analogy of a courtroom to ensure my students prove their thesis when I teach formatted thematic papers. I tell my students that they are lawyers convincing a jury (me) their claim (thesis). Words like “I think” will weaken their argument and if they mention irrelevant evidence, the jury will not buy into their claim. Furthermore, if they are not able to connect the evidence to the claim, that would be presumptuous, and they will not be able to influence the jury in a way that would ensure their winning the case (an A on the paper).

Students understand this and treat their argument differently after this analogy is introduced. If anything, students develop vigor and passion for their argument and try to make their thesis bolder so proving it is a greater challenge. These metaphors make them look at writing through a different lens. Simple plot summary is transformed into analysis.

Another one I use regularly is the actor metaphor for non-finite verbs and non-finite verb phrases (also called verbals). Verbals are verbs that act as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. There are three categories of verbals: gerunds, infinitives, and participles. Initially, when I introduce the topic to my students, who until that point have used verbals in written and verbal speech (without knowing the actual term of the word and phrase), I discuss how certain verbs just do not fit into the verb club, and go rogue, deciding instead to run away and become actors. Everyone

really knows these attention mongers are just verbs, but their acting aspirations infiltrate all our sentences (especially the complicated ones), and thus, we now have verbs pretending to be nouns, adjectives, and adverbs.

It is important to remember that not only do metaphors provide color and a visual dimension into the classroom but also a tangible element to help students grasp the understanding of a new concept. Metaphors, for the most part, are often used by teachers at a subconscious level, yet they are more consciously implemented in mathematics and science classrooms. They must be clearly defined and identified in English classrooms. This paper will bring to light various implementations of this strategy in the context of English Literature and Language Classrooms.

Chapter 3: Metaphor in English Grammar and Writing

Teacher-Made Metaphors

I decided to ask my colleagues who worked with me at DeBakey High School for Health Professions in Houston, Texas to share some metaphors they use to teach both writing and grammar in the classroom and was amazed to find a plethora of information. I have organized the metaphors I collected into two categories: (1) Metaphors for Teaching Writing and (2) Metaphors for Teaching Grammar. Some metaphors will be general and spontaneous; others will be more elaborate and visual. In each section, I will share the metaphor, the teachers' explanation for the metaphor, and the pros and cons of using that metaphor. For instances in which the metaphor was created by me, I will share my personal reflections on the way the metaphor was received and handled in the classroom.

Metaphors for Teaching Writing: Composition

Three-paragraph Essay As **Hamburger**

When students are writing an essay, Diane Franz uses a hamburger analogy to teach structure in her ninth grade classroom.

“The bun is the introduction, the meat represents the body paragraph, one’s hunger is compared to the amount of meat (it is not a burger without the meat or meat “substitute”—one must have at least one patty for a good meal, two or three patties will satisfy your hunger (and the hunger of the audience), and the bottom bun is the concluding paragraph. The bun tends to be smaller on the bottom, just enough to hold the burger together. The lettuce, pickles, onions, etc. are the “extra” garnish that make the burger taste better- just the like transitions in the body, the descriptive diction. They add the extra flavor.”(Franz 2009).

For American students who are familiar with the hamburger, this metaphor works well as it provides a specific visual that the student can conjure herself; however, this metaphor only provides a structural guide, and the student is not given tools on how to describe skillfully or blend transitions artfully. In addition, the hamburger is culturally western, so students who are unfamiliar with western culture may not fully grasp this metaphor.

Five-paragraph Essay As **Hand**

When writing a five-paragraph essay, Franz will also use the hand as a visual for teaching structure to her students.

“Writing a five-paragraph essay to your hand: the thumb (hold up like you are hitch-hiking) is where your paper is going (this is the purpose of the introduction- to tell the audience where your paper is going). The next three fingers are your body paragraphs (notice that they are longer than the thumb and pinky), and the pinky is the conclusion”(Ibid).

The advantage of this metaphor is that it is attached to the body, so the student has access to it and can remember the basic structural elements; however, this metaphor is quite simplistic and cannot be used for upper grade levels, whose teachers' expect more from their writing. Franz mentions that she would use this metaphor for remedial students who need help remembering the basic structure of an essay. In that context, it was beneficial.

Writer As Architect

For essay writing Qian Zhang compares a good writer to an architect.

“A good writer has the mind of an architect. When he designs a building, i.e. the essay, he has to know his client, his audience. Knowing his client's needs makes him aware of what kind of structure he is going to design; and a good writer is also a skillful craftsman. He selects the best building material/examples; he knows how to use the best material to build an artistic and structural-sound building.”(Zhang 2009).

For learners who are familiar with building and engineering, this is a suitable metaphor that can conjure their imagination. Students may, however, need a specific understanding of what the “client” needs, so the teacher will need to make it clear what her expectations are, so the student is aware and can come up with suitable tactics of approaching her “client.”

Writer As Jeweler

Additionally, when Zhang discusses organization and coherence, she compares a writer to a jeweler.

“I always say that a writer is a jeweler who goes out searching for the best pearls. Once he has the pearls, he has to use a string to put those precious pearls together. He knows what his customers want. So he creates value-added pieces, such as a gorgeous necklace or a pair of earrings or an eye-catching bracelet, to cater to the needs of his customers” (Ibid).

Again, Zhang focuses on the big-picture, and while students may understand that they have to make their writing piece appealing, this metaphor may also be too abstract and lack sufficient tools for students to find the “pearls.” Pearls may be evidence or diction—this is

unclear, perhaps, but up to the teacher to decide. The abstract nature of this metaphor allows teachers to manipulate this metaphor any way she likes, but also leaves too much room for ambiguity if not properly addressed.

Metaphors for Teaching Writing: Revision

Peer Revision As Check-up

Mary Hayes uses the analogy of a medical checkup when teaching students how to review her peer's essay.

“I begin by providing a hypothetical situation. The patient comes in with severe pain. Finding a few grammar and editing errors is like treating the wart while the patient dies of a heart attack or bleeds out from a car accident. Students act as the diagnostician to find the unique problems with each essay and prescribe a treatment plan. Students are urged not to give a medicine to fix the problem for today, like insulin for the diabetic. Instead, students are encouraged to write what *he or she* needs to do, such as what to eat, what not to eat, what meds they need to take on a regular basis, etc.”(Hayes 2009)

Since Hayes teaches at a school concentrating on the health professions, students enjoy this analogy, but a similar one with auto mechanics (as Hayes suggests) might work better with a general audience.

While the idea of students giving each other “treatment plans” for the more global issues of his or her essay, grammatical issues may be neglected, so the detailed revisions may need another strategy altogether.

Idiom and Diction Errors As Puzzle Pieces

Hayes, when teaching errors pertaining to cultural idioms and diction errors (errors in which students use the wrong word that, in turn, confuses the meaning of a sentence), will make references to a puzzle.

“Common vocabulary errors are like picking the puzzle piece that looks like it should fit...but it does not. *Eminent* sounds like *imminent*, but they aren’t interchangeable.” (Ibid).

As most students remember putting together a puzzle, this analogy can be quite successful for students who do not understand why a certain word or idiom is confusing for the reader; however, since most idioms and vocabulary knowledge requires a thorough grasp of both the denotation and connotation of a word, students must memorize these idioms for successful understanding. This memorizing may be arduous, but it is also necessary.

Faulty Subordination & Faulty Coordination As **Announcing Race Results Incorrectly**

When teaching the error of faulty coordination (when two ideas in one sentence are incorrectly given the same value) or faulty subordination (when the relationship between two ideas in a sentence are incorrectly unequal), Hayes compares these errors to announcing race results incorrectly.

“Does it matter if the announcer of your race says it was a tie when you clearly crossed the finish line first? (Faulty coordination). What about announcing that the other person actually beat you when you crossed first or together? (Faulty subordination)” (Ibid).

Thus, the relationship between two ideas is fragile and needs to be clearly connected with appropriate conjunctions so that the reader is aware of the subtleties between these ideas.

Hayes explains that this metaphor is “highly successful [in] conveying the concept, guided practice, and standardized grammar problems” (Ibid), but that she has “limited success” when students apply this idea to their own writing.

It may be easier for the student to find fault in another piece of writing than their own, which is why this metaphor may be better suited for peer review rather than self-revision.

Revision As **Five-Tiered Cake**

Hayes suggests a guided step-by-step process for self-revision comparing it to a five-tiered cake.

“Students often turn in the first version of the essays they write, sometimes after a grammar check. They need guidance for revision. The metaphor of cake making helps. Each tier forms the foundation for the next and must be built in order; otherwise, the stability of the cake is compromised. The directions for the students are as follows: (1) Draw the bottom tier and discuss the needs of the paper as a whole: strong thesis, unity, organization, support, interest, balance, citations. (2) Draw second tier and discuss paragraph unity, logic, flow/coherence, and interest. (3) Draw third tier and discuss sentence coherence and structural variety. (4) Draw fourth tier and discuss vocabulary errors. (5) Draw final tier and discuss mechanics and editing. (6) Frosting: Handwriting/Typing, typos eliminated, neatness, MLA format if required, folder if allowed, visuals if appropriate. (7) Draw a person at the top with victorious arms raised and bubble saying, ‘I did it!’” (Ibid)

Since most students tend to focus on mechanics in revision, this metaphor works well for providing them a visual of importance in the core or basics of writing well. There is a clear hierarchy here that gives students a sound understanding of what the teacher will be assessing in the paper.

Some points of clarification may include some modeling of strong unity, organization, logic, coherence, etc., so that students fully understand what they are looking for in their essays.

Metaphors for Teaching Grammar

Classifying Sentences by Structure As Cookies

Franz introduces the classifying sentences by sentence structure unit by comparing the sentences to popular brands of cookies. She starts off by taking out a transparent bag of cookies; within the bag is a sugar cookie, an Oreo cookie, a chocolate chip cookie, and a chocolate chip Oreo cookie.

“Students are asked to match the simple, compound, complex, and compound complex sentences to the cookie that corresponds to it based on its contents. Students are able to decipher what the sugar cookie represents, and in a question and answer session, students become aware to the fact that each cookie corresponds in the following way” (Franz 2009):

Metaphor	Classification	Definition
Sugar cookie	Simple sentence	1 independent, 0 subordinate clauses
Oreo cookie	Compound sentence	2 independent, 0 subordinate clauses
Chocolate Chip cookie	Complex sentence	1 independent, 1+ subordinate clause
Chocolate Chip Oreo cookie	Compound-Complex sentence	2+ independent, 1+ subordinate clauses

Having taught this metaphor myself, I found that students thoroughly enjoyed the cookie analogy, if not simply because this allows sweets in the classroom and a potential to eat something—food engages most learners. More than that, though, the visuals here are quite accurate in describing the elements of a basic sentence (the cookie itself) and what cannot stand alone (the chocolate chip, outer shell, cream, etc). Chocolate Chip Oreo cookies are sometimes difficult to find, so the ease factor for this metaphor is lessened, but for the most part, it is successful.

Parts of Speech/Sentence As **Hats**

Zhang compares each part of speech or part of sentence to the “hats people wear” or roles people play in life.

“Every part of speech wears several hats just like a person playing many roles in society. A person can be a teacher/doctor, a father/mother, a brother/sister, etc. So a noun becomes a head of the household [when it is] a subject in a sentence, a sibling [when it is] an object after a transitive verb, or a child [when it is] a predicate nominative after a linking verb. It depends on where a noun stands; it will play a different role/parts of a sentence in a sentence. So do other parts of speech”(Zhang 2009).

This concept is easy to grasp for the most part because most students are aware of the personas they have in different contexts of their life. For this reason, the metaphor is appealing and sensible.

The metaphor may pose problems, however, when incorporating parts of speech as their roles are more ambiguous.

Compound and Complex Sentences As **Chemical Compounds**

Hayes makes a comparison between complex sentences (sentences containing one independent clause and another dependent clause) and compound sentences (sentences with two independent clauses) to different kinds of chemical compounds.

“Compound sentences are likened to covalent bonds (each atom is stable but they share an electron that connects them, such as H₂). Complex sentences are likened to Ionic Bonds (One becomes subordinate to the other in a way because one takes what it needs from the other, which completely change the nature of the original atoms, such as sodium + chloride = salt)” (Hayes 2009).

This requires a basic understanding of chemistry so it cannot be used for students who do not have that background or understanding; however, Hayes describes it as a successful strategy with “students who like intellectual challenges or prefer science to English.” (Ibid). Others “find this boring,” (Ibid) so Hayes usually offers it as an alternative to a more poetic option.

Sentence Structure Variety As **Roller Coaster**

Hayes compares sentence structure variety or the conglomeration of different sentence lengths and styles, to the art of a roller coaster ride.

She explains, “the best essays and the best roller coasters have variety, surprises, and build. Boring ones can be too simplistic, like the “kiddie” rollercoaster because every “hill” is too much like the others, even if they are all big! They can be dangerous, too. Incomplete sentences or illogical/lack of proper sentence transitions can send the rider/reader careening over the edge---SPLAT. Students first draw a quick picture of an ideal rollercoaster or write a description of a great experience riding one. Students share, then apply the metaphor [into their essays in progress] (Ibid).

Students will need a thorough understanding of simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentences to be able to apply this metaphor to their revision process.

Hayes adds “students that respond enthusiastically in regard to this metaphor are higher level—usually with sophomores and juniors. Freshmen typically do not know enough about sentence structure to apply this well” (ibid).

Vivid Noun Choice As **Generic vs. Name Brand**

When teaching how to replace dull nouns with vivid ones, Hayes compares the process to choosing the name brand over the generic.

“When choosing dog v. pooch, Fido, Pit Bull, or Chihouhou, students sometimes need to be prompted to select the more specific noun. Teachers bring in generic v. name brand cookies, chips, clothing, etc. and have the class pick the ones they would want. Discuss the merits of Name brands, even if they are not designer brands, and their connotations. Students take a previous descriptive essay or journal entry and replace the generic nouns with specific ones, but do not allow the addition of adjectives or adverbs. With advanced groups, teachers should have students eliminate all of the modifiers so that the perfect noun choices convey the images” (ibid).

This metaphor tends to promote materialism as it focuses on the importance of using a name brand, but at the same time, American high school students are quite aware of such status distinctions, so in this way, it can be successful in helping students remember the concept.

Hayes explains that “the student response is usually successful, [but] with students who are reluctant (to apply the strategy) [she] give[s] a minimum number of nouns that must be replaced, telling the students that they would be required to read the final revisions or that the final revisions would be posted” (ibid).

Parts of Speech As **The Solar System**

At the secondary level, many students have already been introduced to the eight parts of speech and have a general understanding of what a noun, adjective, and verb are; however, there are several who come from primary schools that have NOT highlighted this in the curriculum. Because of this, I decided to create a way to engage those who already knew what the eight parts of speech were, and to introduce the parts of speech to the students who were previously unaware. I began to formulate the analogy of a solar system when Pluto was reclassified as a dwarf planet by the International Astronomical Union, much to the horror of those born before 2006. I thought of this demotion as the way a pronoun would feel, having once been a noun—not entirely getting the same recognition as a noun would. I was essentially personifying the pronoun and, in doing so, sowing the seed of this analogy. The rest of the analogy came slowly, through careful reasoning. Table 1 is its completion:

Analog	Part of Speech	Connection
Sun	Verb	revolves, center of the system
Solar Flares	Adverb	occurs actively and forcefully, modifies the sun
Planets	Noun	the matter affected by the sun
Moon	Adjective	determines the tides, changes shape
Pluto	Pronoun	a substitute; we now refer to it as "it"
Orbit	Preposition	determines the position, facilitates other parts of the solar system
Space Shuttle	Conjunction	Connection between objects in space
Comet	Interjection	An interruption and awe-inspiring component in the system

I introduced this metaphor to three ninth grade classes, when we reviewed parts of speech. I made sure that the students had a grasp of what the basic definitions were for a noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, conjunction, preposition, and interjection. Then I presented a PowerPoint that gave them the opportunity to anticipate what each analog (or segment of the metaphor) could be, based on the connection between analog and part of speech. The clues I gave helped most students determine the corresponding part of speech.

After the lecture, I had students play a matching game with different words and their corresponding analog. They enjoyed it, but it was difficult to tell whether the metaphor helped their understanding of the concepts and identification of various parts of speech. I found it challenging to see if this metaphor aided in their understanding. If anything, I think the metaphor added color and interest into a dry topic.

Chapter 4: Student Metaphor Creation

Since the process of metaphor making is imaginative and inspiring for me, I decided to assign my students the same task of creating a metaphor, as I thought it would be just as rewarding. It would also reveal to me their understanding of the concept at hand as well as provide them an opportunity to express their individual interests. As I mentioned earlier in the paper, self-expression is a vital aspect of my teaching philosophy, so what better way to apply it than to have my students participate in this creative process?

Student creation of metaphors is tricky, as students have difficulty understanding that each analog component may not match precisely with the subject's components. Metaphorical thinking not only makes learning more immediate, but also more aesthetically engaging. Problems may arise for this sort of concept, however, when absolute thinkers (or, students who believe in black and white answers and an absolute right and wrong) find it particularly difficult as they are asked to take chances, be creative, and understand their learning in a subjective and unique way. Therefore, I tried to present this assignment in a fashion that would minimize their anxiety. I did not treat the assignment as a major grade or quiz grade. I simply treated it as a completion grade. Did the students do as they were asked? Did they attempt to find a connection, and if so, how were those connections justified?

After having introduced Diane Franz's cookie analogy with the students, I gave my students thirty minutes to create analogies of their own, likening the four classifications of sentence structure to something entirely different. I asked them to create a table with three columns: one with the analog, one with its corresponding subject or component, and another with the explanation (or justification) of their reasoning. The following are three samples of student-generated metaphors for simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex

sentences. Students from my Pre AP Freshman English class were assembled into groups of three or four, and after coming up with their analogy, shared it with the rest of the class. I then analyzed their metaphors for (1) justification (2) strengths and (3) weaknesses:

1. Sentence Classification As School Assignments

<i>Analog</i>	<i>Classification</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
Class work/Homework	Simple sentence	“simple and basic work”
Quizzes	Compound sentence	“quiz covers homework and class work”
Tests	Complex sentence	“test is over some homework/class work and some of the quiz”
Final Exam	Compound-complex sentence	“this is over a little bit of everything, mostly on tests and quizzes”

Students in this group are aware that as sentences have more components (conjunctions, additional independent clauses, subordinate clauses, etc), the corresponding analog, or assignments in the case, get more difficult. That realization is apparent; however, the details of the components are ignored. For instance, what is the component for the conjunction in the compound sentence analog of “quiz”? The same thing could be said for the analog of test and final exam. The details are ignored, but the big picture is understood. This metaphor needs some reexamination, but it shows the groups’ collective understanding that as sentences have more components, they are more complex, and thus, demand more of the writer.

2. Sentence Classification As Various iPods

<i>Analog</i>	<i>Classification</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
iPod Shuffle	Simple	“just iPod”
iPod Video	Compound	“video/iPod both independent clauses, screen is the conjunction”
iTouch	Complex	“iPod – independent clause, touch screen—dependent clause, screen is conjunction”
iPhone	Compound-complex	“iPod – independent clause, touch screen—dependent clause, screen is conjunction”

The metaphor composed by the second group is more detailed. In the explanation, the students state clearly what each component symbolizes, and each part is given value. I was particularly impressed at the students’ realization that if the conjunction is a “screen” in the compound sentence, it must remain in the conjunction in the compound-complex section. There is a consistency and thorough understanding of the analogy, as well as a thorough understanding of sentence classification. It is also relevant to note that although this analogy is creative and innovative, in order for it to work, students must have an awareness of the different kinds of iPod that exists. This metaphor may not stand the test of time as technology advances faster than we can think, but it is detailed and quite successful.

3. Sentence Classification As Burger Ingredients

<i>Analog</i>	<i>Classification</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
Plain Buns	Simple	“buns are simple”
Buns and Patty	Compound	“two different foods come together to form delicious food”
Buns with Sesame seeds	Complex	“plain buns become more complex with sesame seeds”
Buns with Sesame seeds and Patty	Compound-complex	“a complex bun plus patty equals very complex, compounded food”

This metaphor, while taking into consideration that independent clauses have more substance than subordinate clauses, neglects to distinguish the conjunction for compound and compound-complex sentences. Again, like Group 1, this group chooses to look at the big picture idea, and realizes that compound-complex sentences are, indeed, more substantive sentences, with detail and length.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

According to an article on subjective experience, “scholars have come to the conclusion that metaphor may be the underlying process by which we make sense of the world”(Lawley 2010). If this is truly the case, imagine the multitude of teaching tools our own minds can conjure in the process of metaphor making. My personal belief is that our imagination is the vehicle of our understanding. Though the process of metaphor making may be arduous at times, its results can be awe-inspiring and can genuinely aid the learning process. Furthermore, even if metaphor making is a process that teachers and students are reluctant to do themselves, the act of using already applied metaphors can capture the interest of many students, especially those who find the subject at hand dull and unexciting.

When I asked Qian Zhang about her student’s reaction to the metaphors she presented, she stated:

“I think one of the achievements I enjoyed was that my students were able to retain most of what they’ve learned from me even though some content they had to learn seemed to be boring. But through metaphors, the tedious learning process became a bit more enjoyable. Those analogies seem unusual to many of my students. They said those metaphors were cool and had given them deep impressions. Some of them said that my analogies gave them vivid images that were relevant to their daily lives.”

When asked about problems understanding the metaphors, she added that she “did not encounter any serious problems. If some of my students did not get my analogies right away, I usually had those who got them to explain to those confused ones. On those occasions I often received delayed laughter.”

These reflections reassert the idea that although metaphors may at first, seem irrelevant, or complex, the good ones provide a more holistic understanding of a subject, allows students to visualize a new concept in an entirely unique way, and at the very least, may provide humor and camaraderie in the classroom.

My experience using metaphors in the classroom has spurred mixed feelings. I have found that metaphors must first be tested, and I have used the metaphors I have created in a cautious way, adding them as additional modes of understanding a new concept. I think that the metaphor making process for my students was the most successful, as I witnessed my students' minds churning, and I saw as they took pride in taking chances with their imagination. I do think, though, that metaphors are complex and fragile. They require a great deal of testing and manipulation. The questions a teacher poses to her students must be specific and pay close attention to the key components of analogy and definition alike. It takes sound preparation, and a troubleshooting system that checks the metaphor should be created to aid the process.

As a whole, I feel that my journey with the metaphor has been rewarding. As a visual learner who sees things more holistically, I find it appealing. As a teacher who looks at teaching as an art form, not simply a skill, I see it as another tool for creativity. As a researcher, I see that it has laid its foundation over a period of many years, in classrooms, in language learning, in poetry and story telling, and in art.

Most of all, I think there is a great need within English and foreign language classrooms to invest in metaphors and metaphor-making, as it promotes understanding at a visual and creative level. Incorporating the imagination and giving value this new lens is crucial not only for understanding but also by building confidence in the learner. There is great value in giving teachers incentive in creating tools in which to engage their student and in allowing students play a role in their own learning process. This is where metaphors can thrive, and I hope to see more of them in the English classroom.

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