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**Metaphoric competence, second language learning and communicative language ability**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Recent developments in cognitive linguistics have highlighted the importance as well as the ubiquity of metaphor in language. Despite this, the ability of second language learners to use metaphors is often still not seen as a core ability. In this paper, we take a model of communicative competence that has been widely influential in both language teaching and language testing, namely Bachman (1990), and argue, giving a range of examples of language use and learner difficulty, that metaphoric competence has in fact an important role to play in *all* areas of communicative competence. In other words, it can contribute centrally to grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Metaphor is thus highly relevant to second language learning, teaching and testing, from the earliest to the most advanced stages of learning.

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# Metaphoric competence, second language learning and communicative language ability

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Research into the forms, structure and functions of metaphor has come a long way in the last thirty years. A number of writers have argued that many of the research findings have serious implications for second language teaching and learning (e.g. Alexander 1983; Dirven 1985; Littlemore, 2005; Low 1988), but it has taken a long time for metaphor to make significant headway into mainstream pedagogical practice and the design of teaching materials (Kellerman 2001: 182). Even now, there are few commercial second-language courses which teach metaphor as anything other than the basis of colourful idiomatic phrases. Rigorous empirical evaluations of language learning situations or interventions have begun to appear in the last few years, however, and hopefully the results of these, allied to good descriptions of how metaphor is used in the real-world contexts in which learners need to operate, is starting to form the basis of an evidence base for teaching and learning metaphor and indeed figurative language in general.

The reasons why metaphor, and its close cousin, metonymy, have taken so long to permeate mainstream language teaching are not entirely clear. It may be that they are often hard to treat in a clear, rule-governed way. It may simply be that although Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) seminal *Metaphors We Live By* foregrounded conceptual metaphor as something structured, analysable and bound up with culture and everyday reasoning, it did so largely in the context of conventional language. As most of the examples were already taught on English courses either as literal language or as some form of fixed expression, applied linguists may have concluded that vocabulary could just as easily be taught without any reference to metaphor. On the other hand, it may be that metaphors are still felt by some to be largely literary and thus recondite, obscure and difficult. According to this view, metaphor reflects an advanced use by a minority of speakers and there is little justification for exposing most learners to it. Lastly, a somewhat cynical view would be that there are currently few proficiency tests for skills connected with recognising or using metaphor and what cannot be easily tested tends not to be taught (Low, in press).

The object of this paper is to review the scope of metaphor and metaphoric competence in the context of second-language teaching and learning. We use the term 'metaphoric competence' in a fairly broad sense, to include both knowledge of, and ability to use, metaphor, as well as Low's (1988) 'skills needed to work effectively with metaphor'. In order to assess the importance of metaphoric competence in language education, we make use of a general model of communicative language ability (Bachman, 1990) that has been employed widely in the design and validation of both teaching and testing materials. We argue that 'metaphoric competence' is far from recondite, and needs to be seen as playing an important role in all the component parts of the model. Our aim is not to 'sell' any particular theory of metaphor, but rather to show that metaphor is involved in virtually every area that language learners need to use, understand or learn, and that it may even help their learning in cases where native speakers may not actively process metaphorically. We begin with a brief overview of metaphor and metaphorical thinking. Almost all examples will be given from English, or the English of EFL learners.

## 2. METAPHORIC LANGUAGE AND METAPHORIC THINKING

Successful metaphor comprehension and production involves the ability to understand one entity in terms of another (apparently unrelated) entity. For example, if the Japanese Government puts taxes on car imports in order to *create a level playing field* for Japanese manufacturers, the 'Japanese car market' is temporarily treated as a place where competitive sports are played. This could be because markets are hard to describe verbally, because the writer is somehow evaluating the situation, or both. The reader needs to decide which aspects of a playing field are relevant to the discussion about cars and whether the sense of the idiom is being extended. A 'target' term like 'market' or 'competition' may be provided, but the reader may well have to infer it. Either way, many analysts would argue that two *domains* (or 'semantic fields') are being brought together, explicitly by the author, or implicitly by the reader's inferences; the Japanese car market constitutes the *target domain* (the semantic field under discussion), whereas the place where competitive ball sports are played constitutes the *source domain* (the semantic field that is being used to describe, understand or evaluate the target).

At this point it is important to distinguish between linguistic metaphor and conceptual metaphor. Linguistic metaphor can be seen as words occurring in a spoken or written text, which are incongruous in context and appear to have a more basic sense. 'Playing fields' and 'level' have little obvious connection with taxes or car imports, but the incongruity can be resolved by establishing the implication that horizontality implies no unfair advantage to either party in a marketing, rather than game, situation (see Cameron 2003: 59-60). The key point about linguistic metaphor is that the words themselves matter: the choice of 'level' not 'flat' or 'good', or the fact that the three words all tend to be singular, even where several situations are involved. Linguistic metaphor thus takes account of the connotations of particular words and the morphological, syntactic and collocational characteristics of the expression. Research is beginning to show that linguistic metaphors tend to cluster in certain areas of a text, and that they are used to perform a fairly predictable set of functions (Cameron, 2003), but it can also be important to consider the points in, say, a dialogue, where linguistic metaphors do not appear (Cameron and Stelma 2005).

With a conceptual metaphor, the words that are used are often of little interest; what is important is the abstract underlying relationship(s) between two concepts or entities. With linguistic metaphor the entities may have to be inferred, but with conceptual metaphor, they almost always have to be, leading to frequent arguments concerning their optimal specification (see Kövesces ; Grady 1997). Conceptual metaphors can be said to represent ways of thinking, in which people typically construe abstract concepts such as time, emotions, and feelings in terms of more easily understood and perceived concrete entities, such as places, substances and containers (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1993). They are conventionally expressed through an A IS B structure. For example, the conceptual metaphor, THEORIES ARE STRUCTURES, ('structures' constitutes the *source domain*, and 'theories' the *target domain*) is conventionally realised by linguistic metaphors such as:

That's hardly a strong *foundation* for your theory.

The theory needs more *support*.

The theory *rests on* a single rather dubious premise.

It should be noted that in linguistic metaphors it is words like 'rest on' that constitute the source, *not* the hypothesised underlying concept STRUCTURES.<sup>1</sup>

Approaching metaphor conceptually has several advantages. Firstly, it allows for instances of metaphor that are visual, linguistic or auditory, or mixtures of the three. Secondly it allows the analyst to find the metaphor in conventional expressions, such as phrasal verbs (Kövecses 2000 cites 'calm down' or 'simmer down'). Thus conventional expressions, such as 'plan ahead', 'keep on working', or 'back in the '60s', as well as less standard ones like 'a career crossroads', can be seen as instantiating the same conceptual metaphor PROGRESS THROUGH TIME IS FORWARD MOTION. The conceptual viewpoint has proved particularly successful in identifying metaphors underlying abstractions in both basic vocabulary and everyday thinking: ARGUMENT is often thought of in terms of WARFARE, UNDERSTANDING is often expressed in terms of SEEING, LOVE is often thought of in terms of a PHYSICAL FORCE, and IDEAS are often thought of in terms of OBJECTS. Lastly, the conceptual approach has brought out the complexity and systematicity involved in many metaphors, allowing them at times to be clustered in higher-level models of, for example, anger (Lakoff and Kövecses 1987).

In addition to requiring inferences by the listener/reader to establish what word or concept is being treated as what other word or concept, linguistic and conceptual metaphor share the second characteristic of having grey areas of indeterminacy and involving clines (Cameron 1999). The clines occur as clearly separate domains or clearly incongruous meanings move closer together – metaphor merges into metonymy as two domains converge, or it becomes literal (or just an extension of a more basic sense of a word). 'This essay thinks X' is clearly metaphoric, but is 'this essay argues X' or 'this essay describes/states/sets out X'? A third area is important whichever approach one adopts is the need to operate concurrently on more than one level. Many advertisements, headlines, jokes and stories require the reader to construct not one, but a range of non-metaphorical and metaphorical senses for the same words (Giora 2003; Low 1988); the context may involve conventional senses, but the reader may well have to 'blend' the source and target concepts together in very different ways, to create quite new, or 'emergent' meanings (Fauconnier and Turner 2002).

In general, however, linguistic and conceptual metaphor focus on different aspects of metaphor (Grady 1997), though they may interrelate at times, since a listener may need (or choose) to identify concepts in order to resolve the incongruity of a linguistic metaphor. Our contention is that, however much researchers polarise in favour of one approach or the other, language learners need to operate both linguistically and conceptually.

The very ubiquity of both linguistic and conceptual metaphor suggests that second language learners may have to make metaphoric connections between ideas on a regular basis, as metaphoric extensions of word meaning are likely to account for many of the vocabulary items that they encounter. For example, the 'mouth' of a river, the 'eye' of a needle, and the 'head' of the company are commonplace expressions representing metaphoric extensions of parts of the body. Unfortunately for second language learners, despite some significant areas of overlap, metaphoric extensions of word meaning such as those listed above often vary significantly from language to language. For example, in English, we are used to using the word 'eye' metaphorically in expressions such as 'thread the cotton through the eye of the needle' and 'don't forget to get the eyes out of the potatoes', and metonymically in expressions such as 'keep an eye on him for me, please' and 'he's eyeing you up', but we might have difficulty understanding someone who, translating directly from French, tells us that 'she doesn't keep her eyes in her pocket'; 'she's got the American

eye'; or that 'she's got a partridge's eye'.<sup>2</sup> While native speakers may process conventional expressions in a rapid, automatised way, at times without much active thought about basic meanings and concepts (Gibbs 1994; Giora 2003), learners are in a very different situation. They are frequently unaware of standard meanings or default senses and thus may spend more time and effort processing than native speakers (Kecskes 2001). Idioms or 'dead' metaphors (where the non-metaphorical sense of the words cannot be recovered) can be very much alive if you do not know what they mean, and a translation into your L1 does not resolve the incongruity. Similarly, trying to construct multiple levels of interpretation for jokes and headlines is virtually impossible for learners unless they engage in active metaphoric thinking.

It has been demonstrated that if teachers systematically draw the attention of language learners to the source domains of linguistic metaphors and of vocabulary involving metaphor, then the learners' depth of knowledge for that language, and their ability to retain it can improve significantly (see for example, Boers 2000). However, it might be wondered whether learners are actually able to engage in metaphoric thinking without explicit instructions. The following extract, where a group of advanced language learners try to understand the expression 'skirt around' suggests that a small amount of teacher scaffolding can in some circumstances at least, reap rewards (Littlemore 2004). The learners were Japanese teachers attending a one-year in-service training course in the UK. They were discussing the teaching of grammar in English classes and the teacher had used the expression 'skirt around' a topic:

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Teacher   | When we're teaching grammar at lower levels, we sometimes skirt around the hardest topics   |
| Student A | What is 'to skirt'?   |
| Teacher   | What do you think it means  |
| Student B | Hiding them? [Mimes a skirt shape i.e. starts off moving hands down from waist to knees and gradually moving outward, then moves hands round knees about 20 centimetres away from knees, in a circular motion, following the hem of an imaginary skirt] |
| Student C | [Looking at Student C's mime] Go round?   |
| Student D | Avoid?  |

Student B picks up on one of the salient features of a skirt: that it serves to hide, or cover, what is underneath. He then uses mime in an attempt to work out the meaning. Interestingly, although this strategy does not appear to help student B work out its meaning, it does help student C, who suggests the meaning 'go round'. Student C appears to have picked up the idea that a skirt is an outer-garment and that it goes round the knees. Student D either picks up the ambiguity of 'go round' or else applies the movement to a journey where going round an obstacle implies avoiding it. Although these students have not identified the true etymology of the word 'skirt', they have used what is to them (and probably is now to most native speakers) the basic sense, and then employed metaphoric thinking to reach an adequate understanding of the word. It is not known whether these learners remembered the figurative use of 'skirt' in addition to coping communicatively. But pedagogical research over the years on the value of learner autonomy (Benson, 2001), reflective periods (e.g. Storch 1998), strategy monitoring (Cohen 1998) and noticing (Schmidt 1990), all suggests that helping learners to identify and understand their own metaphoric thinking processes, and exercise a degree of control over them, is likely to facilitate both L2 learning and use.



In this introductory section, we have tried to chart a middle course between significantly different theoretical approaches to metaphor and suggested that both the conceptual and the linguistic are needed if language learners are to acquire more than minimal communicative competence in the L2. We also argue that learners are likely to engage in metaphoric thinking more frequently than native speakers and that this active mental and social engagement can be harnessed to facilitate both understanding and learning. Somehow learners have to acquire two seemingly opposed skills; they need rapid access to a standard sense in order to maintain fluency in reading/listening, but at the same time they need to be able to recover, or hypothesise, metaphoric detail in order to interpret accurately and appropriately. In order to justify spending class and individual time on metaphoric thinking, we now need to demonstrate that metaphor is indeed ubiquitous across all aspects of communicative competence.

### **3. THE ROLE OF METAPHOR IN COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE ABILITY**

In order to discuss aspects of communicative competence, an easily interpretable classification system is needed. Several models of competence have been proposed in the last twenty or so years, the most influential of which form a rough family that we will here call the Bachman Model. The family derives ultimately from the component-listing approach of Hymes (e.g. 1971), which was extended for second language purposes by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983). The model was then modified slightly for testing purposes in Bachman's (1990) *Fundamental Considerations in Language Testing* and it is this version that we shall use here. The model has been criticised by Skehan (1998) as not taking enough account of processing, despite the clearer split between knowledge and action made by Bachman and Palmer (1996), but Skehan does not offer an alternative which would suit our aim here. Douglas (2000) too suggested changes, but his list of strategic skills is arguable, to say the least, and his substitution of 'idiomatic expressions' for Bachman's 'figures of speech' runs counter to present needs (2000: 35).

Bachman (1990) takes a broad definition of the term 'competence', which includes, amongst other things, the ability to deal with knowledge-based components of language that have been isolated as theoretical areas, such as 'syntax' or 'cohesion'. Speakers draw on their language knowledge, using a range of strategic skills to link the message appropriately with the social purpose and situation. The language component is summarised in Figure 1.

| <b>Language competence</b>  |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| Organizational competence   |   | Pragmatic competence   |  |
| Grammatical competence  | Textual competence  | Illocutionary competence   | Sociolinguistic competence   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocabulary</li> <li>• Morphology</li> <li>• Syntax</li> <li>• Phonology/<br/>graphology</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohesion</li> <li>• Rhetorical organization</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideational functions</li> <li>• Manipulative functions</li> <li>• Heuristic functions</li> <li>• Imaginative functions</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitivity to dialect or variety.</li> <li>• Sensitivity to register.</li> <li>• Sensitivity to naturalness.</li> <li>• Ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech.</li> </ul> |

Figure 1: The components of language competence (Bachman 1990)

Bachman’s only reference to metaphor is the ‘ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech’ under *sociolinguistic competence*. Indeed, this is the only place in the model where we can see a clear role for metaphor in general. We shall, however, show that metaphor plays varying but important roles in all the cells of the model: namely, illocutionary competence, textual competence, grammatical competence, and strategic competence as well as sociolinguistic competence. We begin by reviewing the role of metaphor within its traditional domain of sociolinguistic competence.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.1 Sociolinguistic competence

Bachman’s phrase ‘the ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech’ highlights the fact that, in order to understand metaphor, it is necessary to appreciate the extended meanings and evaluations given by a specific culture to particular events, places, institutions, or people. It is often argued that cultures make extensive use of conceptual metaphor (Shore 1996; Kimmel 2004), so that a knowledge of shared cultural references is necessary if one is to understand or produce the target language with any degree of accuracy (Lantolf, 1999).

An example of a production error that is based in cultural transfer comes from an essay entitled ‘Fatalism and Social Criticism in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*’ written for one of us by an advanced level student on a pre-session course. The writer wanted to say that no matter how Tess rebelled, she could not escape the clutches of the hypocritical Alec; she wrote: ‘... she is unable to run away from his palm’. In English, power is systematically treated as a manipulable entity and being powerful as an embodied activity – involving catching and holding with the hands. In Chinese, however, the palm is used, not so much due to an underlying conceptual metaphor, but more to an idiom alluding to the vain attempt by the Monkey King to escape from the Buddha’s hand. This difference might also explain why she used ‘run away’, since you can indeed run away from a person (while you can conventionally only ‘escape’ their clutches).<sup>4</sup>

At the level of interpretation, a lack of appropriate background knowledge can also lead language learners to misunderstand the connotations of apparently straightforward expressions (Littlemore 2001a and 2003a). An interesting example of a culturally-based interpretation error comes from a Bangladeshi civil servant, who was attending a short course on 'good governance' at a UK university, and who heard one of his lecturers quote Margaret Thatcher's, 'I want a revolution in the way in which civil servants *attack* their job'. In the post-class written protocol he wrote that he understood the term 'to attack one's job' to mean 'be critical of one's own performance', as opposed to the intended meaning of the lecturer, which was 'to work with more zeal'. Post-class discussion with this student revealed that in Bangladesh there was currently a campaign for civil servants to critically evaluate their ability to perform their jobs, which was partly why he had interpreted the metaphor in this way. He therefore appears to have subtly mixed the conventional focus on defeating an enemy in 'attack a person/their views' and the negative cultural context of his own organization (Littlemore 2001a).

### **3.2 Illocutionary competence**

Illocutionary competence refers to a person's ability to understand not simply the words one is using, but the message that one is trying to convey through those words. According to Bachman, illocutionary competence can be divided into four functions: ideational, manipulative, heuristic and imaginative. It is somewhat arguable how far, say, manipulating (or sensing an intention to manipulate) is a pragmatic, discourse-based activity, or indeed a strategic one, but for the purposes of this paper, we will stay within the Bachman model.

#### ***Ideational functions***

*Ideational* functions, according to Bachman, refer to the use of language to exchange information and feelings about that information. Metaphor is often used to convey one's evaluation of a situation, and an inability to understand the metaphor can lead the listener or reader to completely misinterpret the evaluation. Some metaphoric expressions just report in a fairly neutral way: 'She addressed the question of...', 'He went beyond the advertised topic', or 'He awoke a tenderness in her', but many others, whether innovative or conventional, like 'spill the beans', 'a hard life' or the example above, 'to attack one's job', contain both an information-reporting component and an evaluative component. Indeed, the listener has a much greater need with metaphor than with 'literal' language to be able to tell whether an evaluative component is intended. In terms of production too, the ability to use metaphor to convey one's standpoint is likely to contribute significantly to a student's communicative language ability.

#### ***Manipulative functions***

The primary purpose of utterances with a *manipulative* function is to affect the world around us. They help to get things done, to control the behaviour of others, to build up relationships. Even at the very simple level of the language in which commands are expressed, metaphor forms the basis of a large proportion of conversational utterances which need to be interpreted as orders: 'Calm down', 'Back off!' (about an argument), 'Stop poking your nose in!' and the large range of action expletives best summarised as 'eff off'. In the calmer world of business writing, we again find evidence of the crucial role of figurative language in performing manipulative functions. In the following example, popular business guru Tom Peters uses the

metaphor of a dynamo to recommend a certain type of worker (the ‘dynamos’), to exaggerate the worthlessness of the average worker (the ‘cruisers’) and to imply that average workers should be sacked:

Only 10 to 20% [of workers] are ... dynamos ... always working to learn something new ... continually building their practices in new and challenging areas. The rest of the partners are ‘cruisers’, who don’t stand out as special talents. The bottom line: The long-term success of any professional service company depends on nurturing a high share of intellectual-miracle-building dynamos.

(The Tom Peters Seminar 1994)

Peters’s use of the word ‘nurture’ clearly implies that a high proportion of dynamos must be maintained and have valuable resources devoted to them. The simple fact of ‘not stand[ing] out’ is equated, via the relative clause, with ‘cruising’, which implies going along aimlessly, slowly or even worse, pleasurably. As they are also ‘partners’, which is placed just one word away, the strong implication is that they are failing morally, as well as intentionally. The fate of such people is omitted, but ‘a high share’ would seem to imply that a few can be tolerated and most should be sacked.

The dynamo and cruiser metaphors, supported rhetorically by collocation and various types of implication, can become highly persuasive. It may be that workers have indeed been sacked as a direct result of their managers reading Peters’s book, in which case, the metaphor has performed both an instrumental and a control function. The ability to identify metaphors that serve these functions contributes directly to one’s communicative language ability.

The converse of the above, the ability *not* to be swayed by another person’s use of figurative language, is just as important a part of communicative language ability. In order to avoid being positioned by the writer, readers need to identify the conceptual metaphors and metonymies underlying the arguments. They will then be able to assess their limitations by identifying aspects of the source domains that do *not* transfer easily to the target domains, or even come up with alternative conceptual metaphors and metonymies.<sup>5</sup> There are two important, yet different, aspects to this skill. The first is to survive in the face of deliberately used metaphor, as where the White House aides of the Nixon presidency studied by Lerman (1983; 1985) consistently avoided referring directly to the illegal activities by using a wide range of metaphoric utterances. A less obvious, but equally important skill, is to retain one’s theoretical perspective in the face of unintentional but persistent metaphor indicating the opposite. A good example would be the task faced by someone reading a recent article in *The New Scientist* on the Snowball theory of the evolution of multicellular organisms. The topic is Darwinian evolution based on chance mutation, but key parts of the text are full of animacy metaphors, presumably designed to generate impact and interest (Low 2005). The following are but a sample from the opening page:

What shook the planet out of its primitive complacency and heralded the arrival of multicellular animals?  
each individual cell had to be master of all trades  
collaborations of cells shared the load  
bodies could ... adopt inventive new architectures  
Muscle cells could move these bodies to new grazing grounds  
Sensory cells could warn of danger; and appendage cells could rake in  
supplies

his specialisation turned the *creep* of evolution into a *sprint*  
 life *invented* skeletons  
 ‘the *serious business* of *creating* multicellular life’

Source: *New Scientist* 12 April 2003: 30.

In this sort of situation, both native speaker and learner alike need to be able to block out the implications of intentionality and attempts to direct change, and at the same time to interpret the overtones of familiarity, action and agentivity as rhetorical devices aimed at increasing interest, excitement and readability.

Manipulative functions can be performed in conversation by picking up on and extending the metaphors used by one’s interlocutor. Mio (1996) quotes a televised exchange between a Lithuanian and a Russian representative at the time of Lithuania’s imminent independence from Russia. The Russian representative compared the separation of the two countries to a divorce, claiming that, as they had been married for such a long time, any separation would take time and a period of separation was necessary before any full-scale divorce could be considered. To this, the Lithuanian representative replied that the two countries were ‘not going through a divorce because we were never married, Lithuania was simply raped.’ (p.136). Mio asserts that this is ‘a classic case of metaphoric extension’ (p.137), in which the second speaker picks up on the metaphor being used by the first and extends it, twisting it slightly to lend force to his argument. Mio carried out a further study, in which he asked listeners to rate the persuasive force of the extension, compared with that of a response based on an unrelated metaphor (Lithuania as a prisoner), and a literal response. The extended metaphor was found to be significantly more persuasive than both. Thus the relationship-building function and the interactional function can both be served through metaphor extension.

It may seem somewhat ambitious to expect language students to use metaphor in this way in the L2, though adults at least will have been exposed to the fact of metaphor extension in their first language. The following example involves three Japanese language teachers on an English for Academic Purposes course at the University of Birmingham in 2002, prior to starting an MA in TEFL. After having spent some time preparing the subject, the students were participating in a debate *for* and *against* the explicit teaching of grammar in the language classroom. About five minutes into the debate, the exchange in Figure 2 took place.

| Student | Position taken | Transcript  |
|---------|----------------|---|
| S1      | <i>against</i> | It is best for the students to be <i>showered</i> in a lot of English                                 |
| S2      | <i>for</i>     | But we don’t want to <i>throw them in the water</i>   |
| S1      | <i>against</i> | We are not <i>throwing them in the water</i> , they are just <i>in the shower</i>                     |
| S2      | <i>for</i>     | We need to <i>get them used to the water before swimming</i>  |
| S1      | <i>against</i> | But grammar teaching is like <i>sitting on the tatami mat, and not getting in the water</i>           |
| S3      | <i>against</i> | And <i>there is few [sic] water in Japan</i> , this is why the classroom atmosphere is more important |

Figure 2. Student discussion for and against explicit grammar teaching

The students played with the conceptual metaphor LEARNING A LANGUAGE IS IMMERSION (IN WATER); immersion was elaborated to swimming in a pool and extended to include the social activities surrounding it (including not swimming!). Students on both sides of the debate extended the basic metaphor in order to strengthen their arguments, making their utterances serve a strong manipulative function. In our experience, the spontaneous use of extended metaphors, such as these by non-native speakers is a somewhat rare occurrence, but there is some evidence that, with explicit training in the use of extended metaphors, intermediate students are able to employ them effectively, and to order, in academic debate (Littlemore, 2005).

### ***Heuristic functions***

Bachman's third component of illocutionary competence, the *heuristic* function, refers to our use of trial and error, or *ad hoc* devices, to learn and teach others about the world around us. Teachers, for example, will often create *ad hoc* explanatory analogies to assist learning. Thus Cameron (2002) reports a primary teacher likening volcanic lava to 'sticky treacle' and 'runny butter' and Low (1999a) reported a secondary teacher coining 'atoms are happy when they gain electrons' but telling the students to remember to unlearn it for the exam. Learners working in a second language are highly likely to have to work out how to cope with temporary or *ad hoc* metaphor, and as we show in section 3.5, are likely to use it themselves as a compensation strategy.

In other situations, a metaphor will become inappropriate because technology has moved on. In this case, a replacement metaphor will need to be found; thus, physicists are currently unhappy about the prevalence of the term 'black hole', because they have managed over the years to shed considerable light on the 'blackness'. The same may well happen in a few years with 'string' theory.

A final heuristic aspect of metaphor is the recognition that individual metaphors (whether linguistic or conceptual) give but a partial view of any given topic and that it is therefore quite understandable and 'natural' that multiple metaphors arise. For example, in order to understand the human brain, psychologists have made use of, amongst others, container, telephone network, mirror, loom, homunculus and computer metaphors (Draaisma 2000). Each of these metaphors gives certain insights into the way the brain might function, but none give the whole picture. In a similar way, political ideology can be transferred from teacher to student via the use of restricted, but ideologically loaded metaphors. For example, the welfare state can be described as an umbrella or a safety net, depending on one's political vantage point. Students following university lectures need to identify, interpret, use, and evaluate such heuristic metaphors. The Boers (2000) study cited earlier is also relevant here; drawing university students' attention to the source domains of conceptual metaphors, helped them understand the inferences and value judgements that the writers wanted to convey. They were then in a better position to evaluate the value judgements in particular.

### ***Imaginative functions***

Bachman's fourth component of illocutionary competence is the *imaginative* function, which refers to our ability to create and extend our environment for humorous or aesthetic purposes. This clearly covers virtually all literary or poetic uses of metaphor, whether in formal literary contexts, conventional interactive contexts like children's counting out games and nursery rhymes, or informal conversational attempts to be witty or funny. Read et al. (1990: 139) found that people using metaphors in their first

language were rated ‘more interesting, persuasive, memorable, and having a better command of language’ than those not using metaphors. This result is interpretable in two ways, both of which are relevant here. ‘Being metaphoric’ could be treated as a desirable feature of speech in certain contexts (e.g. being ironic) which learners could acquire – or at least aspire to. Alternatively, it might be argued that ‘being metaphoric’ is more an aspect of personal style and as such, some speakers might actively reject it (Littlemore, 2001b). Little is yet known about the extent to which learners transfer metaphoric preferences from their L1 to an L2, but there seems no inherent necessity for a learner to adopt the same persona in the L2 (see Lam 2000 for a clear example of identity modification). Either way, however, learners must cope interpretively with speakers who use a higher than normal proportion of metaphors in their speech.<sup>6</sup>

Creativity is traditionally one of the most daunting areas to teach in a second language, and it would be helpful if we could find ways of limiting the fear for both teachers and learners. One of the major contributions to metaphor and creativity is the demonstration by Lakoff and colleagues (notably Lakoff and Turner 1989) that very few creative utterances, even in literature, rely on complete innovation; most are extensions or elaborations of existing metaphors. We illustrate this with a sentence from John Banville’s (2000) novel *Eclipse*. Alexander is a child. His father has died and his mother’s reaction is to hit him:

Her look immediately afterwards was one almost of triumph. She lifted her head back and widened her nostrils, like Snow White’s wicked stepmother, and **something came at me out of her eyes, sharp and glittering and swift, like a blade shown and promptly pocketed.**

(p.57)

The conventional elements include: a look traversing space to the person observed, the travelling entity resembling a dagger (‘a cutting look’, ‘look daggers at..’), and the look hurting the person (‘if looks could kill’). The unconventional elements are: (a) increasing the impact of ‘swift’ by transferring it from ‘look’ (‘a swift look’) to ‘eyes; (b) using ‘came at’, which highlights the final part of the look’s journey and does so in terms used of wild animals or humans making an intentional attack (c) elaborating the cutting instrument as a ‘blade’ (d) introducing the idea of ‘pocketing’ to describe the short-term nature of the look and to suggest that the owner still possessed both the look and the accompanying malice and had it/them available for future use: they were just temporarily hidden to the view, not finished and gone. The metaphor effects are supported by the three repetition sequences: the emphatic ‘ands’, the sibilants in ‘sharp’ and ‘swift’ and the /p/s in ‘promptly pocketed’. Just twenty words show a highly complex, yet convergent, interplay of conceptual and linguistic effects.

Other examples can be found in popular economics and business journalism where the ‘invisible hand’ of Adam Smith has been playfully adapted to produce expressions such as ‘the invisible hand versus the iron fist’; ‘does the invisible hand need an invisible glove’ and ‘a green thumb on the invisible hand’ (Resche 2003).

The main implications for second language learners are that they need to acquire some understanding of when and where the speaker or listener is going beyond convention (Low 1988), and that they need to realise when a speaker’s use of a creative metaphor is breaking new conceptual ground. Most importantly, they need to understand the *reasons why* the speaker has chosen to make such a break from convention. It may be that he or she simply wants to entertain, or it may be that he or she wants to get across a much more serious message or opinion. Most learners will

need to deal with extensions and elaborations of metaphor from the point of view of coping with reading or listening tasks, but if we are genuinely interested in giving learners power over the L2, then it could be argued that they should be encouraged to play with conventional metaphors as speakers and writers, tailoring their solutions, like John Banville in the extract above, to fit specific contexts or emphasise particular meanings. How far native speakers accept creativity and language play by learners, or simply treat it as error, remains unclear (Boers 2004), but on balance the advantages of playing with the L2 would seem to outweigh the disadvantages.

The extensive role played by metaphor to perform ideational, manipulative, heuristic and imaginative functions suggests once more that it may be beneficial to help learners *notice* when metaphor is being used in a way that is unfamiliar to them. A related factor is the extent to which language learners *expect* people to use metaphor. As metaphor is often seen by non-linguists as a ‘poetic’ device, language learners may not expect to hear it used on a regular basis in more prosaic contexts. It may therefore be beneficial at a general level to raise their awareness of the ubiquity of metaphor and to highlight the fact that metaphor is used to perform a wide variety of functions.

### 3.3 Textual competence

Textual competence refers to the ability to understand and produce well-organized and cohesive text in both written and spoken contexts. Rhetorical organization refers to the overall conceptual structure of the text, and the effect this has on the reader or listener. Textual competence also refers to the use of language conventions to establish, maintain and terminate conversations.

We begin by noting the importance of metaphor at the edge of discourse units. Several studies by Drew and Holt (e.g. 1998) have shown in a very clear way that people systematically use figurative language to summarise and close off encounters or to change topics:

Ten lines of dialogue explaining a procedure:  
Hugh Yeah I will do. Yeah. That’s great. Mm.  
Liz Uh... Yeah. *Takes a bit of digesting*,  
Hugh It will do. Yes.  
Liz /Still try it/ Hehehe!  
Hugh You got it, Hehehe

In this example, Liz exclaims that the information will ‘take a bit of digesting’, presumably to indicate to Hugh that it is time to break off and for her to spend some time analysing, summarising and/or evaluating what he has just said. The figurative expression tends to be general, almost clichéd, in nature (one of the few ‘natural’ environments in modern English for proverbs), and does not continue the argument. As such, the listener interprets the speaker as disengaging from the argument and asking to end/change the topic. Low (1997) found very similar uses of metaphor at or near the boundaries of written text units, with the difference that boundary frames were often far more elaborate and multiply intertwined than in speech and that the various functions (like summarising, evaluating, disengaging) were at times expressed by different metaphors in the vicinity of the boundary, rather than being conflated into one single real-time expression.

Metaphor is also used to help structure the argument within units of text or talk (Cameron and Low 2004). Koester (2000), for example, found that figurative



language, and particularly metaphor, was consistently used to signal problem-solution-evaluation patterns in conversation: a common feature of argumentative text (Hoey 1983). The high proportion of metaphoric language used to signal problems is, according to Koester, an illustration of the fact that figurative language often involves a reduced risk of evaluation by listeners, by allowing speakers to shelter behind shared values (Moon, 1998). It also allows speakers to discuss emotionally charged subjects whilst avoiding committing themselves (a point also made by Lerman 1983, 1985). This relates to the ability to use figurative language to interpret and control hedges, which appeared in Low's (1988) formulation of metaphoric competence.

### 3.4 Grammatical competence

Grammatical competence refers to a language learner's knowledge of, and ability to use the grammatical system of the target language. Of all Bachman's categories, this is the one that we might expect to be least related to metaphoric competence. However, with recent developments in the field of conceptual metaphor and cognitive linguistics, it is clear that large numbers of phenomena that language educators regularly treat as grammatical have a strong metaphoric component, though one often needs to look within the lexical item (of say phrasal verbs) to find it. A number of cognitive linguists (e.g. Langacker 1987) make the stronger claim that most, or even all, grammar reflects cognitive organization, but the examples below do not require such an article of faith. The furthest we go here is to note that, even where a word has undergone considerable grammaticalisation, it can reflect an earlier and more concrete basic sense (Hopper and Traugott 1993; Bybee et al. 1994). To make the case that metaphor is centrally involved in at least some of the grammar that learners need to acquire, we have chosen the areas of demonstratives, prepositions and aspect. We assume that most readers will be familiar with 'grammatical metaphor' (Halliday 1985; Halliday and Kirkwood 1999) in which dynamic processes are metaphorically construed as stable states and frequently manifested as nominalizations and noun phrases. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to offer a lengthy discussion of grammatical metaphor, it does provide us with another example of the role that metaphoric thought can play in clarifying the link between grammar and cognition.

#### *Demonstratives*

The terms 'this' and 'that' in English form part of a minimal closed set, where the two items contrast with each other and sometimes with 'it' or 'the'. The basic literal sense of 'I'm talking to this guy here' is that the listener is an object, which is clearly in existence here and now, of considerable current relevance, highly visible and tangible. On the other hand, 'I'm trying to talk to that guy over there' positions the listener as more distant, less visible (invisible and thus seemingly non-existent, if distant enough) and of considerably less current relevance. The literal meaning of the demonstratives thus appears to relate to an idealised and bounded conversation space (Clark and Clark 1977). Sentences such as the following are not easily explained in terms of this literal sense, however, unless metaphor is invoked.

- (1) After eating: '*That* was really good!'
- (2) Back reference in speaking: 'Let's go out.' 'Yes *that's* a good idea.'  
Versus back reference in writing. 'He suggested going out. We thought *this* would be a good idea.'
- (3) Oh *that* (awful) woman/man!
- (4) Joke: 'There was *this* Englishman....'

- (5) Phone: Is *that* John? No *it's* Peter.
- (6) Noise: Who's *that*?
- (7) Introduction: 'Peter, *this* is John!'

Physical distance is used to flag non-existence ('finished and gone') of food in (1) and speech – as apart from writing - in (2). The complaint and the joke introduction use physical distance to signal psychological rejection in (3), or to force a sense of familiarity on the listener in (4). In the phone response (5) and the cry in the dark (6), there is actual physical distance, but also a strong sense of the unknown, and the psychologically unfamiliar, or threatening. In the social introduction (7), 'this' does indicate familiarity, but it also acts as a performative, to *create* social acceptance (or in effect, social existence within the conversation group).

In sum, if metaphor is allowed, all seven examples above can be accounted for in a very straightforward manner, as metaphorical distancing from an idealised conversation space. What is more, the mechanisms invoked are, in our experience at least, extremely easy for a teacher to teach, or a learner to comprehend. Metaphor is not only relevant, but its use permits a 'human-sized' account of an otherwise highly abstract or arbitrary system (Low 1992). It is these days a commonplace to note that metaphor frequently involves 'embodiment' (Gibbs 1999, 2003), but the above uses of human bodies and closely associated experience and behaviour does serve to illustrate one sense of embodiment. Given the earlier discussion about metaphoric thinking, it might be felt that native speakers do not 'think' much when choosing or using these terms and that 'thought' is restricted to a teacher offering an explanation to learners. However, it will be noted that variations on (1) to (7) are perfectly possible (e.g. 'There was that Englishman...') and the listener needs to establish fast whether the speaker is indicating an evaluation, or whether the use of the demonstrative alters the illocutionary function of the utterance (e.g. not flagging a joke).

### *Prepositions*

Prepositions and particles represent a traditional and recurring nightmare for all learners of English. Inasmuch as prepositions generally act as the dependent item in phrases, it is reasonable to treat them (as most EFL coursebooks do) as essentially grammatical phenomena. There has been much research in the last twenty years into the way that the different senses of prepositions are frequently not unrelated, but are rather, orderable, in a straightforward manner, away from one or more prototypical sense. The movement from sense to sense can often be accounted for in terms of simple location/ position extensions, or of application of the same conventional metaphors that underlie much English vocabulary. Thus 'I'll be there inside an hour' involves a unit of time being treated as a ring or a box whose edges are the time concerned – similar to the conversation space in 'This is John' (above). Or again, if the TV is 'on' it is physically active and if you are 'turned on' you are psychologically active, if you are feeling 'off (colour)' you are physically or psychologically not your usual self and possibly 'off work'.

There is a suggestion, from Boers and Demecheleer's (1998) study involving 'beyond' and 'behind', that teacher accounts of prepositions having extended metaphorical meanings can facilitate L2 learning. Boers and Demecheleer also suggest that, when teaching prepositions, language teachers should not just sequence teaching from the literal to the extended, but could also usefully employ clines in the form of clusters of three or four sentences:

1. You can't see Snowdon from here, it's over there, *beyond* those hills.
2. We cannot buy this house: it's *beyond* our means
3. His recent behaviour is *beyond* my understanding
4. The use of English prepositions is *beyond* me.

It remains controversial how far researchers or indeed teachers wish to accept the conceptual position that 'in five minutes' or 'on time' are metaphoric (Goatly 1997; Hunston, personal communication), but it is hard to explain 'inside an hour' or 'off work' any other way. The Boers and Demecheleer study suggested that actively thinking about prepositions as metaphoric facilitated short-term learning for some university-level students, at least. Whether younger or less proficient learners would find the notions more problematic remains unclear.

### *Tense / aspect*

All learners of English need to understand and use 'will do' and 'going to do'. However, the two can be extremely hard to differentiate, and, to this end, we suggest that metaphorical senses are worth establishing,

Firstly, we note that the original, and still the basic (although not the most frequent), meaning of 'I am going to York' is that I am 'on a path towards York'. In the case of future aspect, the future is metaphorically an entity and I am moving towards it. Secondly, we may note that 'will' has several senses, starting historically with 'desire' and extending metaphorically through 'willingness' and 'expectation', to its most recent meaning of 'instruction' (Tyler and Evans, 2001, see also Palmer 1986). This simple distinction allows us to account for the otherwise hard to explain difference between:

- (1) *If we invest in this project, we'll lose all our money.*
- (2) *If we invest in this project, we're going to lose all our money.*

The phrase 'we're going to lose all our money' can be treated as positioning us metaphorically on a path that currently exists, on a trajectory towards bankruptcy. The implication is that the metaphorical 'downward path' is already happening – or at least the future signs are already visible. The 'will' in 'we'll lose all our money' involves no such positioning, however. It simply involves an expectation, or prediction, that bankruptcy will definitely occur. The implication is therefore that the speaker in 'we're going to' is somehow more emotionally committed, or involved in the outcome. The speaker in 'we will' is being more clinically objective.

In section 3.4 we have shown that metaphor is involved in a range of grammatical phenomena which learners of English need to be able to understand and use. We have also tried to suggest that the explicit use of metaphor by teachers can offer simple, comprehensible 'human-sized' accounts in place of arbitrary or complex theoretical grammatical ones. Moreover, since grammar is rarely a topic of great interest to learners, explicit appeal to metaphor might also serve to motivate and engage them more than at present. Some language educators have gone even further; Holme (2001, 2003) for example has attempted to use the underlying schemata of journeys and spaces to help learners arrive at tense/aspect markers through direct bodily experience. Embodiment thus becomes the driving and triggering force for learning grammar, as well as passively accounting for it. The pedagogical possibilities are intriguing, and there is evidence from Lindstromberg and Boers (2005) that Total Physical Response techniques can facilitate the learning of verbs of movement, but what is now needed is solid research evidence that experiential instruction can aid the learning of grammar.

### 3.5 Strategic competence

The second major dimension of the Bachman model and the final area where metaphoric thinking may play a role is 'Strategic competence'. Recent reformulations of the Bachman model have isolated a series of five very general, non-linguistic skills, such as evaluating (a situation, task, or response), deciding whether to respond, planning what would be needed to achieve an adequate response and organizing the 'elements of language knowledge' to do it. The last skill was added by Douglas (2000), though how far it can be said to be non-linguistic is somewhat arguable. Concepts such as 'evaluating' and 'planning' are too general for a meaningful discussion about how language users handle metaphor to achieve their intentions, so we will focus instead on the earlier formulation, in terms of 'communication strategies'.

There are two principal approaches to looking at strategic competence in terms of communication strategies: the 'psycholinguistic' approach and the 'interactional' approach. Proponents of the psycholinguistic approach tend to define strategic competence as speakers' ability to use strategies to compensate for gaps in their knowledge of the target language, in order, for example, to keep a conversation going (see, for example Poulisse 1990). These strategies are generally referred to as 'compensation strategies' (Tarone 1983: 62). Proponents of the interactive approach, on the other hand, focus more on the ability of two interlocutors to manipulate the conversation and to negotiate shared meaning (see, for example, McNamara 1995). We would argue strongly that metaphoric thinking has an important role in both compensatory and interactional aspects of strategic competence.

#### *Compensation strategies*

Compensation strategies include circumlocution, paraphrase, word coinage and transfer from the L1, and of these, word coinage and paraphrase are often metaphorical in nature.

The strategy of *word coinage* involves making up new words or expressions to get one's meaning across. In order to do this, speakers often use or adapt words that are available to them in original or innovative ways in order to express the concepts they want. This process often relies on metaphorical thought, as it involves the ability to stretch the conventional boundaries of word meaning. The use of metaphorical thought to fill lexical gaps created by the emergence of new semantic fields has been central to change and development in language. For example, recent attempts to introduce private sector thinking into the British public sector have given us 'ring-fenced budgets', 'beacon authorities', 'joined-up Government', and 'one-stop shops'. Another example is the plethora of metaphoric terms describing aspects of computing. Indeed Dirven (1985) contends that metaphorical processes account for the majority of meaning extensions of lexical items.

The tendency of native speakers to extend the meaning of words to describe concepts for which they lack the appropriate vocabulary has been well documented (Clark 1981, 1982). Clark cites cases where children have used words such as 'sleeper' for 'bed', 'darking' for 'colouring in' and so on (Clark 1981). She maintains that lexical extension by means of metaphor is one of the main strategies used by young children to learn their native language (ibid.). Children are thought to use two mechanisms for creating new words: *combining morphemes* and *changing word meaning* (Elbers 1988). It has already been established that the changing of word meaning is a metaphoric process, but Elbers argues that the process of combining

morphemes is also metaphoric in nature. She cites as evidence word coinages such as ‘moon-nuts’ (for ‘cashew nuts’) and ‘car-milk’ (for ‘petrol’).

In many ways, the lexical innovations that are made by children in their L1 are similar to the word coinage strategies used by second language learners when faced with gaps in their knowledge of the L2. Tarone's (1978) example of an L2 word-coinage strategy where the word ‘airball’ was used to approximate the word ‘balloon’ is exactly the kind of utterance that one might expect of a child learning his/her L1. This strategy is said to occur “when learners stretch the semantic dimension of the vocabulary that they already possess” (Kumaravadivelu 1988:311).

Research by Kellerman (1977, 1983, 1995) has shown that there are constraints on transfer (or ‘cross-linguistic influence’) strategies from the L1; there is a higher chance of adapting an L1 phrase if the two languages are perceived by the learner as typologically close, but a lower chance if it is perceived as being specific to the L1 culture, or just generally ‘opaque’ (see also Littlemore, 2003b).

The second communication strategy, *paraphrase* (of an existing or known term), often involves metaphoric comparison. For example, when asked to convey the target item ‘peacock’, a university student said that “it has spots on its wings that are like eyes” (Littlemore 2001c). Other examples included “a pipe for elves to smoke” (target item = acorn), “chewing gum” (target item = slug), “like a lit candle” (target item = squid), and “like a helicopter” (target item = dragonfly).

As long as students are able to signal their use of such expressions appropriately, their use should increase both their fluency and their overall communicative effectiveness, enabling them to use their language resources in order to express a wider variety of concepts.

### *Interactional strategies*

An interactional strategy, in a very broad sense, is a way of shaping spoken or written text so that it realizes the purposes of the speaker (or writer). This may simply be an attempt to keep a conversation going in a certain way, as in the use of figurative expressions to negotiate a change of topic (Drew and Holt 1998), or it can be the use of complex metaphoric boundary frames in written texts. One framing strategy noted in Low (1997, 1999b) and Cameron and Low (2004) for written journalistic articles consists of starting a text with a metaphor that relates to the topic of the article, but finishing it with a different metaphor: one based on the title and with a degree of animacy or humanity. A good example of this comes from a short technology article in *The Economist*, which starts with two related food metaphors and ends with a squid one:

#### *What the SQUID did*

Think of a freezing cold sandwich with the thinnest of fillings. It is not an appetising thought; but understand it and you know, more or less, how a superconducting quantum interference device (SQUID) works.

|

Cheap, small SQUID magnetometers may yet come swimming out of the laboratories.

Source: *The Economist* June 11 1988: 129 (Cited in Farrell 1988)

In order to position readers of an explanatory text, metaphor is frequently used in combination with other devices, such as referring to people and their actions, giving direct quotes, making jokes, or being ironic. The reader is made to feel that, despite a lack of expertise, he or she can deal with the topic. Interestingly, writers may alter the

positioning of the reader as the text progresses (van Langenhove and Harré, 1999). In the SQUID article (above) outlining recent research in electronics and the Josephson sandwich, the author begins by discussing edible sandwiches, their appetising nature and their fillings. This is done in combination with interactive devices like imperatives ('Think of') and direct address to the reader ('you know'). However, as the reader starts to understand the topic, 'sandwich' is demetaphorised at several points, notably by manipulating collocations away from edible concepts and by removing the direct appeals to the reader. The result is that 'sandwich' is used as a neutral technical term.

Metaphor has also been observed as a strategic tool in specialist discourse. Cameron, in her (2002, 2003) discussion of the primary teacher talking about volcanic lava (see 'sticky treacle' example above) noted how the teacher took care to introduce the basic sense of the argument about lava to the children *before* the metaphoric expressions were used and to use two metaphors which came at the topic from slightly different angles, but which together focused attention on central aspects of what was being taught (unlike a science book Cameron also examined). The teacher systematically used metaphor as one part of a method of presenting explanations in classrooms which was tailored to the audience.

Strategic competence would not appear to be functionally isolated from the other competences. For example, in both *The Economist* and *The New Scientist* texts the author is not just interacting with the readers, but is evaluating something and trying to convince the readers to adopt a particular view of themselves or the content. Strategic interactive functions are thus closely entwined with the evaluative and manipulative functions of Bachman's illocutionary competence (sec 3.2). Moreover, the need for readers to come to terms with the framing, or edge effects, in *The Economist* text illustrates a further connection between interactional strategic competence and Bachman's textual competence (sec. 3.3). We conclude that, ultimately, a surprisingly large amount of metaphorical language is used with various types of strategic aim in both spoken and written text.

#### **4. CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

In his 1988 article, Low attempted to set out a series of skills that learners needed to master if they were to attain real skill with a second or foreign language. This was described as 'metaphoric competence'. While such a portrayal was of interest to metaphor scholars, it failed to connect with the broader frameworks of skill and ability standardly used by language teachers, testers and researchers. In the present article, we have tried to expand the 1988 paper and show how metaphorical language and thought play a significant, indeed key, role in all the areas of competence noted in the Bachman model, namely sociolinguistic, illocutionary, textual, and grammatical competence (or knowledge) and strategic competence. We have moreover done so using examples both of learners acquiring and using a second language and of native speakers 'setting up', intentionally or not, the communicative obstacles that learners need to overcome. Our evidence has also highlighted a number of ways in which learners can control, or fine tune, their responses to the situation and to their own personalities; control over metaphor thus represents an important way in which learners can develop a 'voice' in the second language.

As much recent second-language oriented research into metaphor has emphasised vocabulary (knowledge and skills in the experiments by Boers and colleagues, cognitive linguistic relationships in Pütz, Niemeier and Dirven (2001) and Achard and Niemeier (2004), and intercultural differences in Charteris-Black (2002),

Kövecses (2003) and Deignan (2003)), we would propose that future research looks particularly at the more neglected discourse-related areas of illocutionary and strategic competence; learning about words is not the same as learning to use them or deciding whether one is being manipulated, and control over metaphor is one of the essential tools for empowering learners to cope successfully with native speakers.

## NOTES

- 1 Contrary to standard practice, we use the labels ‘source’ and ‘target’ here for both linguistic and conceptual metaphors, with the proviso they represent words in the first case and inferred underlying concepts in the second. This is purely to aid readability. For the same reasons, we talk of ‘domains’ in both cases, meaning ‘semantic field’ for linguistic metaphors and ‘conceptual (e.g. schema-based) links’ for conceptual metaphors. The reader is referred to the discussion in Heywood et al. (2002), Semino (2005) and Heywood and Semino (2005) on problems with domains in metaphor identification.
- 2 ‘ne pas avoir les yeux dans sa poche’ (= to be observant); ‘avoir l’œil américain’ (= to have a quick eye) ‘un oeil-de-perdrix’ (=a corn or callous).
- 3 The taxonomy of language knowledge proposed by Grabe and Kaplan (1996: 220-1) does, in fact, include ‘Tropes and figures of expression’ and ‘Metaphors/similes’ under ‘Syntactic/structural knowledge’, but their exclusion from ‘Basic syntactic patterns’ and ‘Preferred formal writing structures’ would seem to suggest that they are not intended to impinge much on grammatical ability below clause level.
- 4 There are other linguistic expressions in Chinese that *would* imply an underlying metaphor (or metonymy) of POWER IS HAVING STRONG HANDS, but a very informal poll of Chinese graduate students by one of us suggested that some at least (including the writer of the essay when interviewed) perceived this expression differently, retaining its folktale / religious overtones.
- 5 Lakoff (1996) makes much the same point in his extensive treatment of American conservative political language and reasoning.
- 6 The texts of spoken and written discourse examined by the Pragglejaz group, and using identification by multiple raters, have tended to show an average metaphor rate of about 10%-15%. Several of the results are accessible on <http://mies.let.vu.nl/workbench/english/resource/pragglejaz.html>

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