Metaphors Used In Students' Daily Conversations: Untold Stories

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Abstract: - Metaphors are used every day to explain and elucidate emotions, feelings and make your speaking and writing more personal, more memorable, and more persuasive. The purpose of this study is to investigate the use of metaphors in daily conversations of young students in university environment contexts. Metaphors will be studied and discussed in all aspects: Metaphors in different poits of view; what metaphors are used by students in these conversations; Classification of used metaphors following cognitive linguistics. Contributing this research basis, by empoying both qualitve and quantitative methods, in this present study, contrastive analysis the use of metaphors will be also covered.

Keywords: Metaphors, daily conversations, university environment contexts, cognitive linguistics

1. Introduction

This article aims to find out metaphors used in students' daily conversations is the way to help English students improve students' English speaking performance in general. In the modern society, English has been taught as a subject in schools, and metaphor is a part of one of the compulsory subjects in my university. However, Vietnamese students still cannot speak English fluently and use metaphors effectively in their daily conversations. The main reasons can be traditional thoughts and students' lack of motivation in learning using metaphors in their daily communication.

The first reason inspiring me to carry out this research is the new point of view and the strong development of metaphors currently. Along with the development of cognitive linguistics, the scientific study of human languages in relation to human cognition, cognitive semantics has been paid a lot of attention, which facilitates conceptual metaphor to flourish recently. Conceptual metaphor is considered to be an essential and indispensable phenomenon in both language and thought. "Conceptual metaphors are seen in language in our everyday lives. Conceptual metaphors shape not just our communication, but also shape the way we think and act." (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 387).

One more important reason made me conduct the research is because of no other research about

metaphors used in students' daily conversation of carried out before both worldwide and in Vietnam.

The last reason why I really want to carry out this research is the importance, beauty and meaning of using metaphors in our daily conversations.

All in all, although there exist numerous causes inspiring me to conduct a profound research on metaphors used in students' daily conversation, it is deeply examined in this research is to investigate the use of metaphors in daily conversations of young students including students of two following universities in university environment contexts.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definitions of Metaphor

There are many different definitions of metaphors, in fact. The concept metaphor is mentioned and discussed in Buss and Jost (2002), the main features of classical metaphor can be described as follows: (1) metaphor is a trope, i.e., a figure of speech that is to be found on the level of single words (lexis); (2) metaphor is the transposition of meaning from one word to another; (3) metaphor is a deviant and thereby improper use of words; and (4) metaphor simply replaces some equivalent literal expression that has thus just an ornamental function in discourse.

However, the concept metaphor is widened when metaphors are not reducible to their literal meaning.

The first typical author is Richards, who defines metaphors through two terms, namely topic and vehicle used metaphorically and the relationship between them is called ground. Inheriting Richards' ideas about metaphors, Black goes on developing them more deeply and widely when he emphasizes that metaphors are able to help us to see one concept from the point of view of the other.

According to Lakoff and Johnson's Metaphors We Live By in 1980, they said: " Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language, but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, it is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (p.454).

As a result, the awareness and importance of metaphor in variety of fields, especially in the fields of psychology, cognitive science and education . It has been begun to be paid much attention and highlighted. In applied linguistics, conceptual metaphor theory is incorporated into a model of teaching and learning foreign languages (Danesi 1994, 1995; Velasco Sacristan, 2005). In addition, metaphor is explored in language, thought, culture and artistic expression (Gibbs, 2008).

In Vietnam, although cognitive linguistics in general, and conceptual metaphor in particular have appeared for only one decade, they have significant contributions to the linguistic development. In addition, a large number of Vietnamese researchers have great inspiration and interest in conceptual metaphor such as: Nguyễn Hòa (2007), Trần Văn Cơ (2009), Phan Văn Hòa (2011), Nguyễn Văn Trào (2007, 2014) etc. In addition, there have been studies conducted on conceptual metaphors related to various topics by various researchers in English and Vietnamese.

2.2. Cognitive linguistics

Language is a way of organizing knowledge that reflects the needs, interests, and experiences of individuals and cultures. Cognitive Linguistics grows out of the work of a number of researchers active in the 1970s who are interested in the relation of language and mind, and who do not follow the prevailing tendency to explain linguistic patterns by means of structural properties internal to and specific to language (Kemmer and Barlow, 2000). About a decade later, Cognitive Linguistics is considered an approach to the analysis of natural language (Lakoff, 1987; Langacker, 1990; Talmy, 1978). In other words, it focuses on language as an instrument for organizing, processing, and conveying information. Hence, it means that the analysis of the conceptual and experiential basis of linguistic categories is of primary importance within Cognitive Linguistics.

3. Methodology

➢ Design: Both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The methods are classroom observation, questionnaire and interview.

➢ Participants: 150 students from 2 different universities of The University of Danang

➢ Data analysis:

• From questionnaires: Categorized and counted in numbers and percentages shown in figures and tables

• From interviews: Classified, coded, analyzed and commented.

From class observations: Used to clarify information given in questionnaires. The results were also used to compare with those of the questionnaires and interviews to find reliable information about the frequency and interest of using metaphor in their daily conversations.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. The reality of using metaphors in students' daily conversations between The University of Foreign Language Studies and The University of Economics

It can be seen that most of the students in this study understand the importance of Speaking in learning English.
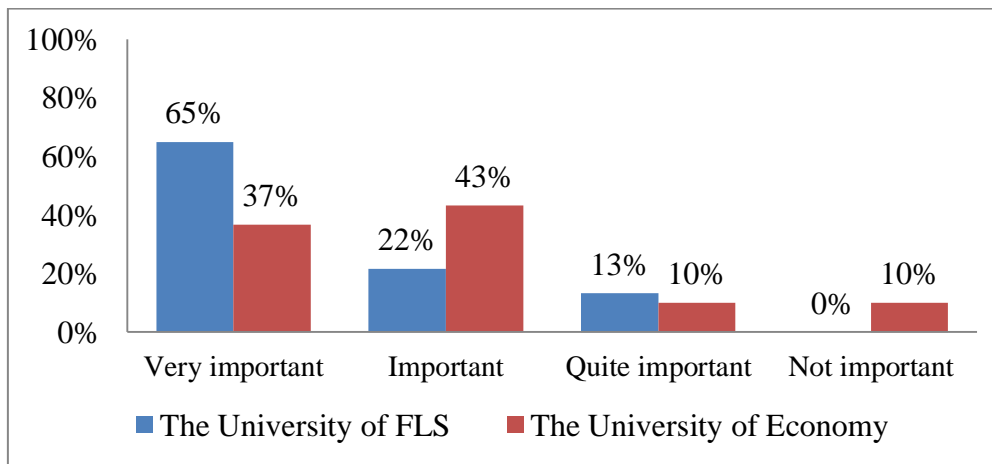
Students' opinions on the importance of using metaphors in their daily conversations

However, many students said they did not feel enthusiastic when speaking or using metaphors in their conversation. After investigating 150 students, the following result is found:
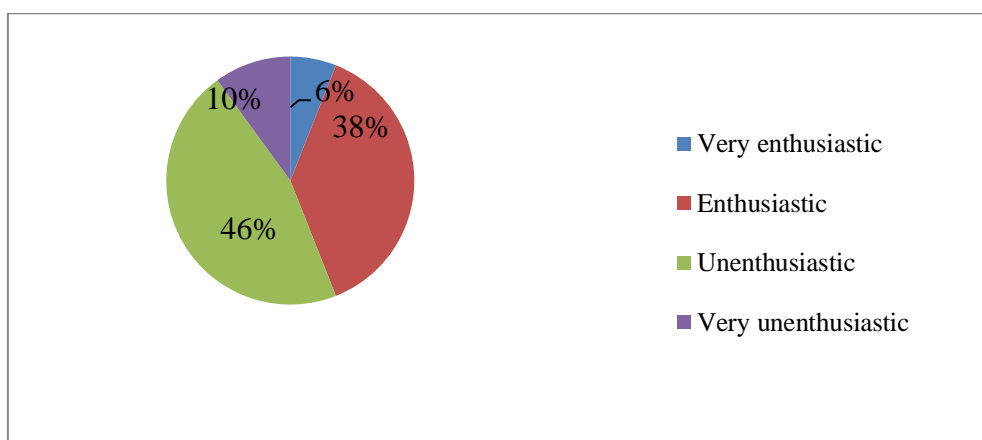

Students' feeling when learning using metaphors in their daily conversations

About half of the students did not feel enthusiastic in learning English Speaking because of many different reasons. Most of them said that using metaphors in both English and Vietnamese was very difficult. They did not know how to express their ideas exactly when using metaphors in English.

38 percent of the student expressed their interest. Most of them like using metaphor when communicating with foreigners. When the students were asked if speaking English was important and why in the questionnaire, 90 percent of them agreed that speaking was important in learning English and using metaphors in their daily conversations makes their conversations become more beautiful.
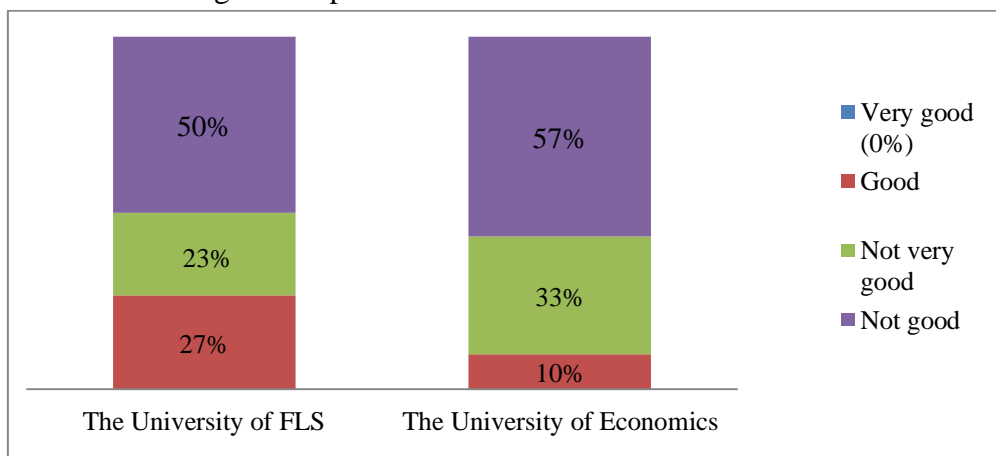
Students' ability of using metaphors in their daily conversations

However, as the result shown in the chart, a large number of students said that their speaking performance in both English and Vietnamese was not good because they do not know how to use language structure or some language devices such as metaphors.

4.2. The students' reasons for using metaphors in their daily conversations and their problems

After asking students to complete the questionnaires, students are using metaphors in their daily conversations in particular and learning speaking English in general for many different reasons. According to the table, the highest percentage of the students (account for 67.33 %) identified "to get a good job in the future" as the main reason for using metaphors when talking to each other. Most of jobs require English skill and good speaking skill of students. If they speak English well, they can get a good job easily. Especially, having good conversations helps them create a good impression in their job interview.

No.	Reasons	Number of students (150 students)	Percentage
1	To get a good job in the future	101	67.33 %
2	To communicate with foreigners	81	54 %
3	To watch English TV program, listen to English songs, etc.	79	52.67 %
4	To get good marks in the subject	46	30.66 %
5	English Speaking is fun and interesting	28	18.67 %
6	Metaphor is a compulsory subject at the university	27	22.50 %

The students' reasons for using metaphors in their daily conversations

Problems students have in using metaphors in their daily conversations:

No.	Problems	Number of students (150 students)	Percentage
1	Lack of vocabulary	81	54%
2	Lack of basic knowledge about topics	74	49.33%
3	Time for talking activities is limited	70	46.67%
4	Conversation topics are not interesting	52	34.67%
5	Teacher doesn't use much English in speaking lesson	38	25.33%
6	Lack of confident and afraid of "lose face"	36	24%
7	Pronunciation and grammar mistakes	30	20%

The students' problems in learning English Speaking

Clearly, after investigating students at two above universities, they have many problems in using metaphors in daily conversations. It means that there still exists many factors affect students' ability in learning and using metaphors to make their daily conversations become more meaningful and beautiful.

5. Conclusion

A conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that metaphorical structures yield a denseness of meaning that more congruent structures typically dilute. In many cases you may face that fact that the message conveyed cannot be encoded in any other way than metaphorical wording. Metaphor, however, is not easy to use and interpret. People find it difficult in facing with metaphor. There is a fact that it is not an easy task to decide a wording metaphorical or not let alone to understand it. Nevertheless, knowledge of metaphor helps students a great deal in understanding and providing both speaking as well as their daily communication.

Therefore, we suggest that metaphor should be taken into account in developing speaking and everyday materials for students.

Recommendation for using metaphors in students' daily conversations and practicing speaking skills:

- Teachers: Besides recordings in the curriculum, teachers may use metaphors as a material to enhance the students' speaking skills or translation subject. The introduction of metaphors used in students' daily conversation with interesting contents matching the students' level will be more effective in motivating students' usage of metaphors every day to improve their speaking skill. Moreover, teachers may let their students discuss about these topics to motivate them in study as well as improve their translating and interpreting skills.

- Students: Students should use more time to study about metaphors in particular and using metaphors in their daily conversations in general. Speaking skill is as important as other skills and needs frequent practice. This requires the responsibility and awareness from each student. The self-motivation in using metaphors is also an effective method.

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