

Exploring Pre-Service Teacher's English Language Teaching and Learning Metaphors: The Case of Students in Teacher Licensure Courses in Japan

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According to Richard and Lockhart (1994), language teaching is a complex process that can be conceptualized in various ways, often described by the actions and behavior of teachers and their impacts on learners. Metaphors are crucial elements in structuring our perceptions, thoughts, and actions (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). Research by Farrell (2006) indicated that the coherence of their metaphors represented their concepts of teaching and practice and helped them achieve a clearer reflection on their beliefs. Thus, using metaphors to uncover pre-service teachers' beliefs is essential for understanding the underlying concepts that shape their teaching practice. By becoming aware of their teaching beliefs through metaphor analysis, future language teachers can reflect on whether their teaching approaches are effective, thereby helping to improve teaching methods and achieve better educational outcomes.

The present research, with an exploratory stance, investigates the potential of using metaphors to quantitatively understand pre-service teachers' insights about language teaching. Conducting a large-scale survey of 308 participants attending teacher licensure courses in Japan provides a statistical categorization of metaphors, offering a more comprehensive understanding of students in teacher development programs. The present study addresses the gap in current research, which has previously been done and relied on qualitative methods or studies with a small number of participants. Based on the collected metaphor of English teaching and learning (Koide, 2019; Watanabe, 2017), a questionnaire with items such as "English learning is (a metaphor) because ..." was developed. In this study, a six-point Likert scale questionnaire was employed as an instrument, and by applying factor analysis to the questionnaire items, this study attempted to identify the latent factors influencing the conceptualization of pre-service teachers to answer the research question: How are metaphor items about English language learning, English learners, and English teachers statistically categorized through factor analysis?

Results illustrated that there were five categories for language learning metaphors: effort for progress, encounter, learning process, endless process, and practice for the next stage; there were three categories for English learner metaphor: beginner's struggle, growth by encountering the unknown, and immaturity; there were four categories for English teacher metaphor: supportive roles, an expert, a guide, and strictness. From the semi-structured interview, many participants reported that responding to the questionnaire made them aware of an unconscious part of their own teaching perspectives. Additionally, while the metaphor used for questionnaire items resonated with participant's own thoughts, the provided reason in some question items did not match their view, suggesting the need for modification of the questionnaire items for future research. Furthermore, students' demographics of the participants might have influenced the results, as about half of them were second-year students. Therefore, it is crucial to scrutinize the inventory and data from semi-structured interviews to further investigate the origins of the conceptualization of language teaching.

References

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