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FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN ACADEMIC TEXTS

Mukumov Makhmud Khudayberdievich

acting associate professor of Termez university of economics and service,

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Philology

caen05@gmail.com

(+998) 97 645 00 81

Abstract. This article examines the role of figurative language in academic discourse. Many people believe academic discourse strictly refers to a literal meaning. In contrast, an article published in the journal Written Communication argues otherwise. It discusses why figurative language is important for research articles. Through insights from cognitive linguistics and discourse studies, it is argued that metaphor constitutes a central cognitive and rhetorical device in the construction and communication of academic knowledge. Study reveals crucial function of metaphorical expressions for a better conceptualisation and organisation of arguments. It also establishes dense relationships between disciplinary framing of papers and the use of metaphorical language.

Keywords: figurative language, academic discourse, metaphor, conceptualization, cognition, rhetoric, disciplinary framing, academic literacy, pedagogical translation.

INTRODUCTION. Academic writing is known for being accurate, lucid and logically organised. In this traditional view it can be seen as inappropriate or unnecessary since figurative language is usually associated literary creativity rather than scientific explanation. Consequently, the academic style is often described as being neutral, impersonal and, literal (Biber et al., 1999). However, further investigation into scholarly linguistic discourse reveals that figurative language plays a systematic and meaningful role in the conceptualization and communication of academic knowledge. According to the academic literature, metaphor and other figurative devices do not merely serve a decorative or stylistic function. Rather, they are essential cognitive and rhetorical resources that enable explanation and understanding as well as argumentation (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This is especially the case when scholars speak of the abstract, the theoretical, or the highly complex. Such matters cannot be perceptually direct or empirically observably grounded (Gibbs, 2008).

A number of academic disciplines study phenomena which cannot be simply construed as an “experience” happening in any one individual’s sensory reality. These could be things like the mind, society, institutions, economy, etc. It enables writers to associate an unfamiliar concept with a familiar physical, social or spatial experience in a figurative manner and this facilitates its understanding and ordering (Kövecses, 2010). The terms conceptual frameworks, learning pathways or information flow suggest that bodily displacement, materiality and spatial

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referencing are being applied to intellectual operations. Over time, such expressions become highly conventionalized and are often perceived as technical terms rather than figures of speech, which is why their metaphorical origins hardly surface in the academic world. The distinction between text and discourse reflects both structural and functional dimensions of language use (Mukumov, 2023). Metaphor is not just a valuable phenomenon in poetics or expressive language, but rather a basic mechanism of human thought and categorization (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The use of metaphors like build an argument, support a claim, and bridge a research gap influence the framing of scholarly reasoning and the representation of intellectual progress. Therefore, by analysing figurative language in academic writing systematically, we can teach academic writing better, translate more effectively and be sensitive to disciplinary conventions.

METHODS. In order to investigate how figurative language operates in academic texts across disciplinary areas, a qualitative corpus-based discourse analysis was conducted in this study (Cameron & Maslen, 2010). A qualitative methodology was deemed relevant due to the need to interpret the communicative and conceptual roles of figurative expressions, as well as simply determining their presence in extended discourse. The analysis was not restricted to metaphors as isolated lexical items. Rather, it viewed figurative language as part of greater arguments and explanations, as suggested in discourse-oriented metaphor studies. This afforded an understanding of how metaphor functions in meaning-making in academic discourse.

The total of sixty peer-reviewed research articles were collected from international journals mentioned in major indexing databases. There were twenty articles consisted of three disciplines such as linguistics discipline, education discipline, and economics discipline published from 2018 to 2024. All texts were composed in English and contained conventional research article structure (Swales, 1990). The selection was done to maintain a disciplinary mix; as well as comparability of genre, audience & publication standard. I selected the articles from reputable journals such as the international popular press or social media to cut down on the variation of style (Biber et al., 1999). The Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) by the Pragglejaz Group (2007) acted as a guide for the identification of figurative expressions through careful manual reading. All the lexical item was tracked for its contextually different meaning from a more basic concrete meaning, whose meaning was able to explain with metaphorical or associative mapping. The analysis was concerned with figurative expressions that make up regular academic vocabulary, with no high metaphorical or creative expressions. The expressions identified were grouped into four categories, namely metaphor, analogy, personification and metonymy (Kövecses, 2010). As this order allowed for a systematic comparison, it also granted interpretive flexibility, as many expressions fulfilled more than one function.

After identification, the surrounding discourse of figurative expressions was analysed to ascertain their primary communicative function. The functional categorization looked at whether the expression mainly contributes to concept explanation, argument construction, evaluative stance or disciplinary framing. This part of analysis focused on the working of figurative language at local and global levels of textual organization. To enhance reliability, a second researcher independently coded a random sample of the data following standard

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qualitative validation practices. There were differences in how we categorised things but an agreement was reached.

RESULTS. According to the study of the academic corpus, figurative language is a fairly common and systematic phenomenon in research writing in all disciplines. Metaphorical expressions appeared both in the explanatory passages and also in methodological descriptions, theoretical discussions, and evaluative commentary. It is not merely stylistic choices but are stable patterns that contribute to the coherence and communicative efficacy of academic texts. In most instances, the metaphorical language was so conventionalized and embedded within the technical vocabulary which made it functionally identical to literal language for seasoned readers (Gibbs, 2008). In all the disciplines important metaphor was structural and building metaphors. Terms like framework, foundation, model, and architecture are used to describe theoretical systems and the designs of research. By implying that knowledge can be built and arranged in stable ways, the industrial metaphor stresses logic (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Linguistics study, for instance, represented grammatical theory in terms of layered structures and interacting components. In education studies, by contrast, instructional models were construed as generative structures that assist in the development of learners (Alexander, 2008). In economics, it's logically led to theoretical approaches which provide analytical framework to complex data.

Another major category of figurative expressions consisted of metaphors of movement and process. The verbs used to describe research development, for example, progress, advance, shift, and evolve, contribute to a dynamic view of knowledge production. The framing of learning as a journey, complete with paths, stages, and trajectories, presented educational and economic systems in a manner of reacting, stabilizing, or adapting to pressures. These metaphors describe academic phenomena as things that take place over time, with associations of development, adaptation, and change (Kövecses, 2010).

It was regularly noted, especially by reference to systems and texts. It was alleged that data suggested, indicated, or revealed; theories described as explaining or predicting; and models as responding to variables. By doing this, they ease narrative flow. Also, they reduce the amount of effort or thought that readers have to put in when reading (Gibbs, 2008). Though they are strict metaphors, they are part of the accepted stylistic arsenals and the economy of the text. Metonymic expressions were important for constricting complex, institutional and social processes to manageable linguistic ones. The literature, classroom, or the discipline was often referenced to represent a network of actors, practices, and norms (Biber et al., 1999). Authors effectively used this kind of figurative compression to present large structures and retain a unified coherence over length.

With respect to the communicative function, most of the figurative language use was associated with conceptual explanation, particularly when abstract processes were introduced or summarized. The use of metaphors help the readers to visualise theories by helping in scaffolding. Moreover, figurative language framed research as cumulative, progressive, or integrative, which contributed to the organization of argumentation. Phrases like building on prior research or connecting conceptual aholes showed logical continuity established a relationship between new findings and existing constructs. Research contributions have been

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metaphorically regarded as strong or weak, robust or fragile, offering authors a means of having assessment moulded within the conventions of academic objectivity.

DISCUSSION. The claim of conceptual metaphor theory is supported by the pervasive occurrence of metaphor across texts in different disciplines – abstract reasoning depends on embodied concepts (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The information points in Crowston and Jiang's (2013) model manifest through different spatial meanings as contained in knowledge management literature. Frames of meaning are metaphorical cognitive models that remain stable when the theoretical systems or the research development which they scaffold undergo changes (Gibbs, 2008). Through their use, scholars can communicate complex features of their materials, methods and desired outcomes in cognitivity accessible form.

The dominance of structural metaphors points to what cognitive linguists refer to as ontological metaphors, that is, we can treat an abstract entity as if it were an object or a system that you can analyze and manipulate (Kövecses, 2010). When theories get characterized as frameworks or architectures, they become something we can conceptualize so that readers can picture how various components interrelate. In the same way, metaphorical uses of movement express process-based models of learning and social change, reinforcing readings of development, particularly in educational research (Alexander, 2008). These findings show how metaphor shapes not just language but also models of explanation in disciplines. The author is guiding meaning through that interaction and by positioning their claims within their own community. Metaphors pertaining to the construction and progression of parts perform this interactional function by ordering arguments and signalling continuity of thought. In addition to that, evaluative metaphors enable scholars to render judgment while complying with institutional mandates for objectivity.

The disciplinary differences in metaphor patterns lend support to sociocognitive models of discourse which view knowledge production as shaped by institutional practices and common professional cultures. Scientist propose, ideologies will affect the emergence of a dominant metaphor and its interpretation within a community of practice. Metaphor use focused on facilitating education which is advantageous for growth and helping dominated the space. These metaphors occurred in conjunction with learner-centered pedagogical educational paradigms. Economic metaphors which depicted markets as reactive systems drew instead on models of equilibrium and regulation. Therefore, this can help maintain a uniform theorization across disciplinary perspectives.

The results are also important in terms of pedagogical translation. Translation studies scholars contend that metaphor goes beyond its linguistic phenomena and it must be seen as a cultural and institutional phenomenon (Hatim & Mason, 1997). When teachers use metaphors that do not relate in a conceptual way their pedagogical intent is weakened. Educational practices vary significantly from one national context to another, assuming often involves Western conceptions of education (Alexander, 2008). The translator's role certainly extends into the realm of pedagogical philosophy, as they must also mediate philosophically. Thus, they are a mediator in more complex cultural conceptions. Or rather, lexical meaning and pedagogical philosophy are never far apart. The results back up a view on figurative language that combines cognitive, rhetorical and institutional perspectives. Metaphors help in understanding, organize the discourse and represent disciplinary ideology. Understanding these

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diverse purposes may help facilitate better academic communication and a more pedagogically informed approach, especially in multilingual settings.

CONCLUSION. The presence and functions of figurative language in academic texts from linguistics, education and economics have been examined in this study which proves that metaphor and the like are at the centre of scholars' discourse (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The use of figurative expressions was found to help explain concepts, organize arguments, evaluate positions, and frame messages analytically. Figurative language is not merely decoration; it is a cognitive tool used by scholars to map abstract phenomena to more comprehensible and manageable ideas (Gibbs, 2008). The figurative patterns of different disciplines suggest that metaphor is a major factor in how something comes to be known. Moreover, it influences how it is taught. As highlighted by the findings, figurative language does not merely ensure understanding but also safeguards identities of disciplines and research paradigms. The results indicate the importance of metaphor awareness in education for academic literacy from an applied perspective. By showing that figurative language is at the heart of academic discourse, this research challenges the assumption that "scientific" excludes figurative language. This will also enhance academic communication and the translation of pedagogical practices.

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