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Teaching Metaphors in the EFL Classroom

A Case Study of Georgian EFL Learners

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Abstract

This article is part of a larger research project focusing on metaphorical language production in second language acquisition. In the current study, I first explore the significance of metaphor awareness in second language learning and the current state of research in L2 metaphor pedagogy, particularly the integration of conceptual metaphor awareness into EFL instruction. Second, I present a case study of Georgian EFL learners, which investigates the effects of teaching metaphorical expressions on learners' production of the taught expressions, with particular emphasis on the CMT-based approach and the incorporation of TBLT methodology. The effectiveness of this approach was assessed using a pre-test, post-test, two-week delayed test, and follow-up survey, which suggested significant improvement in the metaphor awareness of Georgian EFL learners compared to the control group. This study builds on Saaty's (2016) experimental research and extends its approach to evaluate the effectiveness of CMT-based instruction for advanced EFL learners.

Keywords

Georgian EFL learners, metaphoric competence, conceptual metaphor theory, task-based language teaching

1. Introduction

Metaphors have traditionally been regarded as linguistic ornamentations rather than as essential elements of language. It is unsurprising, then, that their inclusion in L2 teaching and learning is still a relatively new concept and faces many obstacles even today. The present article explores metaphorical language production from an L2 pedagogy perspective, with a particular emphasis on teaching metaphors through conceptual

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metaphor awareness. The research aim is to examine whether using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) to teach metaphorical expressions enhances the metaphor awareness of L2 learners. It outlines a four-week investigation with advanced-level Georgian EFL learners, who participate in a classroom session, a series of tests, and a survey. The detailed lesson plan and tests developed for this case study offer a practical example of how teachers can implement CMT in conjunction with the task-based language teaching (TBLT) methodology in the classroom. Importantly, the case study of Georgian EFL learners addresses gaps in previous research by focusing on advanced learners, implementing a comprehensive TBLT framework for CMT-based classroom instruction, and evaluating the cued production of metaphorical expressions through an open-ended cloze task.

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the theoretical foundations of integrating metaphor instruction into L2 teaching and examines key previous studies on teaching through CMT. Section 3 outlines the research design of the current case study, such as the participant profile and the methodological framework. Section 4 presents the findings of the study and compares the performance of the metaphor group and the control group. Finally, Section 5 summarizes the consequences of these findings within the larger context of L2 metaphor pedagogy.

2. Theoretical Background and Literature Review

2.1. Metaphors in L2 Teaching

The idea of L2 metaphor pedagogy and the history of acknowledging metaphor as a ubiquitous element of language and thought are largely intertwined. To briefly recapitulate key notions, the history of metaphor recognition in language started with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) viewpoint, which suggests that metaphor greatly impacts our lives and shapes our ideas and behaviours even outside of language. According to their Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), a conceptual metaphor is an association between two semantic concepts in the mind, where a familiar and concrete source domain is mapped onto a more complex and abstract target domain (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 4–5). For example, *time is money* stands out as one of the most prevalent conceptual metaphors and illustrates the value of *time* by drawing on the more tangible concept of *money* (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 7–8). Conceptual metaphors are conveyed in language through linguistic metaphors. For instance, the conceptual metaphor *time is money* finds expression in phrases like *You're wasting my time* or *How do you spend your time these days*? (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 7–8).

Eight years after the emergence of CMT, Low (1988) was a pioneer in suggesting the integration of metaphor instruction into language teaching. According to Low (1988, 129), in order for language learners to be considered proficient users, they should acquire certain metaphor-related skills that native speakers normally possess. These abilities include the capacity for logical interpretation of metaphorical expressions, knowledge of both traditional and novel metaphors, comprehension of suitable source and target domain pairings, and awareness of potentially socially sensitive metaphors (Low 1988, 129–134). Later on, Low (2008, 221–222) refined his inventory of critical metaphor-related abilities that students require but are hardly ever taught in the classroom. He highlighted skills such as identifying multiple levels of metaphorical meaning in communication, interpreting others' metaphors through cultural understanding, and discerning why speakers extend their communication beyond conventional expressions.

When it comes to teaching metaphors in the L2 classroom, Low (1998, 137–139) argues that it is neither ideal nor sufficient to teach metaphorical expressions only when they occasionally appear in texts. Instead, he suggests that engaging in activities that involve multiple texts and tasks is often more advantageous than concentrating on a single text, as this approach provides teachers with greater creative freedom in lesson design and offers students a more effective learning environment (Low 1998, 139). A further point made by Low (2008, 220) is that simply teaching students the meanings of metaphors does not guarantee that they will retain this knowledge over time or improve their use of metaphorical language; nevertheless, most instructional designs on teaching metaphors still focus solely on explaining their etymologies and definitions.

Revisiting Low's perspective on metaphor and education in 2020 reveals that the practical application of integrating metaphors into language teaching has not progressed significantly over time. Low (2020, 49) observes that despite the proposal to incorporate metaphors into L2 learning over thirty years ago, there has been minimal effort to include metaphoric competence in EFL teaching syllabi, textbooks, or exams, aside from a few rare resources and activity sets. Consequently, this limited approach to metaphor education hinders learners from acquiring the aforementioned skills that are essential to attain high proficiency in their target language. The current study helps fill this gap by showing how the CMT-based classroom instruction can improve metaphoric competence through well-planned lessons and provides practical ideas for adding metaphors to EFL teaching.

Another significant contribution to promoting figurative language use in foreign language classrooms and enhancing metaphoric competence among EFL

learners is the work of Littlemore and Low (2006). Metaphoric competence, in its broad interpretation, refers to learners' cognitive ability to comprehend and produce metaphors, as well as their sociolinguistic abilities, such as an awareness of common metaphors, socially sensitive metaphors, multilayered metaphors, and so on (Littlemore & Low 2006, 79). To facilitate students' metaphoric language competence, Littlemore and Low (2006, 200–201) advocate for involving learners in realistic, well-structured tasks with specific functional objectives, as these activities enable learners to perform the functions associated with figurative language more effectively. This methodology aligns with a three-stage, task-based language learning framework (TBLT) proposed by Willis and Willis (2007), which will be further discussed in Section 2.3. In their exploration of figurative language teaching methods, the authors distinguish two approaches: treating figurative language as a separate category, and using the conceptual metaphor approach (Littlemore & Low 2006, 205–207). The first approach treats figurative language as an isolated category and gives metaphors and idioms an exclusive position, which can unintentionally reinforce the misconception that such elements are separate from everyday language and not integral to daily communication. The authors consider the second approach more effective, as it directly integrates conceptual metaphors into teaching materials and emphasizes that metaphors are foundational to everyday language use (Littlemore & Low 2006, 207).

Building on this perspective, MacArthur's studies (2010, 2016) significantly contribute to understanding metaphor use in teaching English and developing metaphoric competence in EFL learners. Drawing on Littlemore and Low's (2006) extensive research on metaphors in foreign language learning, MacArthur (2010, 156) argues that it is insufficient to aid comprehension and retention of figurative language and emphasizes how important it is to support learners in actively producing metaphors in their second language. One suggested activity to foster metaphor production in the classroom is assigning students a writing task on an abstract yet familiar topic – such as future professions, goals, or love – after which teachers provide targeted feedback to enhance students' metaphoric competence (MacArthur 2010, 169). The author points out that teaching metaphors in EFL classes can be particularly beneficial for intermediate-level students whose skills have stagnated, as it introduces a refreshing alternative to traditional grammar and vocabulary instruction and provides a flexible method to support their progression toward advanced proficiency (MacArthur 2010, 158). The unfortunate tendency, as MacArthur (2016, 413) highlights, is that metaphors are frequently neglected in most

language courses for L2 learners and receive little consideration within Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) criteria. Given the essential role of metaphors in language learning, this oversight underlines the need for better integration in EFL classes, as explicit metaphor teaching and encouraging students to engage deeply with meanings may significantly enhance overall language proficiency (MacArthur 2016, 422). To sum up, the theoretical papers reviewed underline the importance of systematically incorporating metaphor instruction into L2 teaching and note that this approach can substantially enhance learners' figurative language competence and overall language proficiency. The importance of incorporating metaphor instruction in L2 teaching is also supported by previous empirical studies outlined in Section 2.2 and their findings are summarized in Sections 2.3 and 4.1.

2.2. Previous Research on Teaching through CMT

After exploring the theoretical aspects of L2 metaphor pedagogy, it is now essential to examine key experimental studies that have applied the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) approach in teaching English to L2 learners. These studies can be grouped into the following categories: teaching phrasal and polysemous verbs (Kövecses & Szabó 1996; Boers 2000; Csábi 2004; Condon 2008), teaching idioms (Li 2002; Boers et al. 2004; Beréndi et al. 2008; Pan 2019), and teaching metaphorical expressions (Saaty 2016; Niemeier 2017).

The primary focus of this article is the last category, which will be examined in detail in Section 2.3. However, it is first important to present a brief overview of the studies on teaching phrasal and polysemous verbs and idioms. The first-ever experimental study to employ the CMT-based approach in teaching L2 learners was conducted by Kövecses and Szabó (1996). Their focus was on teaching phrasal verbs that involved spatial conceptual metaphors, such as *up-down* metaphors (e.g. *happy is up*, *sad is down*). The CMT-based teaching approach was tested on an experimental group of 15 intermediate-level Hungarian learners of English, and their results were compared with a control group of the same size who received only a list of phrasal verbs with Hungarian equivalents (Kövecses and Szabó 1996, 346–347). Both groups completed a fill-in-the-blank task with missing phrasal verbs, where the experimental group outperformed the control group (Kövecses and Szabó 1996, 349–350). These positive results sparked further interest in CMT-inspired teaching approaches.

Boers (2000) and Condon (2008) scaled up this research on spatial conceptual metaphors. Boers (2000, 560) included 74 intermediate-level French learners of English, and Condon (2008, 114) included 111. In both studies, participants were divided roughly equally into experimental and control groups. Boers (2000, 562) reported that the experimental group's gap-filling test scores were significantly higher than those of the control group. Condon (2008, 141) enhanced the research design by incorporating both a pre-test and a delayed post-test administered six weeks after the immediate gap-filling task. Although the experimental group outperformed the control group on the immediate test, their performance showed no difference in the delayed post-test (Condon 2008, 148–149). This finding suggests that while teaching phrasal verbs via CMT may be beneficial for short-term retention, its long-term benefits are less certain.

The benefits of the CMT-based instruction were further supported by Csábi's (2004) study, which focused on teaching the polysemous verbs *hold* and *keep*. This study involved 52 Hungarian secondary-school learners of English. The experimental group received explanations for expressions that involved these polysemous words accompanied by their underlying conceptual metaphors, such as *possessing something is holding* or *control is holding something in hand*. In contrast, the control group was taught various senses of verbs *hold* and *keep* alongside their Hungarian equivalents (Csábi 2004, 238–241). Results from both the immediate gap-filling test and the two-day delayed test showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group, which led the author to suggest that explicit instruction of the conceptual metaphors behind the polysemous verbs can improve both comprehension and retention among L2 learners (Csábi 2004, 246–249).

Turning to idioms, Li (2002) conducted the first experimental study with 52 intermediate-level Chinese learners of English that focused on idioms with the *container* source domain, such as the idiom *he's up to his neck in debt* from the *difficulties are containers* conceptual metaphor. The experimental group was introduced to the target conceptual metaphors and discussed how the *container* source domain relates to the human body, while the control group received traditional explanations of idiom meanings (Li 2002, 157). In both the immediate gap-filling post-test and the one-week delayed test, the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group (Li 2002, 184–185). Additionally, a follow-up questionnaire revealed that students favoured the conceptual metaphor awareness approach and perceived it as a new method that made idioms easier to remember (Li 2002, 185–186).

Following this, Beréndi et al. (2008, 76) conducted a long-term experiment on teaching idioms through CMT with 43 intermediate-level Hungarian college students. They administered an immediate gap-filling test, with a retest two days later to assess medium-term retention and a further test after five months to evaluate long-term retention. The students were divided into a control group, who simply translated and memorized the idioms during the lesson, and an experimental group, who were introduced to CMT and received idioms grouped under their respective conceptual metaphors, such as *she breathes fire* and *to add fuel to the fire* listed under *anger is fire* (Beréndi et al. 2008, 75–76). The results of both the immediate and two-day delayed gap-filling tests showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group, which supports the hypothesis that the CMT-based teaching can improve short- and medium-term retention (Beréndi et al. 2008, 77).

Similarly, Pan (2019) examined the effectiveness of the CMT teaching approach with idioms grouped under the *anger is fire* conceptual metaphor. The experiment targeted a different participant profile: 43 elementary-level primary school Chinese learners of English, unlike previous studies that focused on intermediate learners. The control group received the target idioms with translations and associated images, while the experimental group received idioms organized by conceptual metaphor, along with corresponding images (Pan 2019, 66). In both the immediate and the one-week delayed gap-filling tests, the experimental group scored higher on average than the control group, which suggests that the CMT-based lesson may also benefit young English learners (Pan 2019, 70–72).

Finally, while these results demonstrate the effectiveness of CMT-based teaching in a classroom format, it is also significant to examine a study that explores a computer-based, self-study format. Boers et al. (2004) conducted the first experimental study to teach idioms to Dutch intermediate-level college students with the help of a self-study, computer-based program designed to aid L2 idiom comprehension. The students were divided into two groups: a control group that completed a simple comprehension task about given idioms during the self-study program and an experimental group that completed a task in which they identified the source domain of each idiom (Boers et al. 2004, 62, 70–71). Post-test results revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group on the gap-filling task, which suggests that students who were familiar with the idiom's source domain were more likely to select the correct meaning (Boers et al. 2004, 65–66, 72). These findings show that CMT-based teaching could be beneficial in self-guided learning and offer students additional flexibility.

Interestingly, all of the abovementioned studies focus on adult intermediate-level English learners, with the exceptions of Csábi (2004), which involves intermediate-level secondary school participants, and Pan (2019), which focuses on elementary-level primary school participants. While early studies (Kövecses & Szabó 1996; Boers 2000) only administered immediate tests to compare control and experimental groups, more recent studies also included delayed tests to assess vocabulary retention. The test format in these studies predominantly involved closed cloze tasks, where participants selected words from a provided box to complete the sentences; thus, they assessed retention and comprehension rather than independent production. These similarities in study design highlight a gap in the literature and suggest the need for future research to expand beyond intermediate-level competencies. Future studies could incorporate tests that measure immediate, medium-term, and long-term retention, along with pre-tests for more accurate comparisons. Additionally, open-ended cloze tasks, where students complete gaps without a provided list, could assess both comprehension and independent production of learned expressions.

It is also worth noting that the teaching component in all of these studies was relatively simple and straightforward, with minimal focus on detailed lesson planning. Typically, the experimental groups were provided with conceptual metaphors alongside the target expressions grouped under them, while the control groups received lists of expressions with translations and definitions. This indicates that the instructional approach in these studies was not grounded in specific teaching frameworks, such as TBLT or other structured methodologies. Therefore, more attention to detailed lesson plans could offer insights into how teachers might practically adapt CMT in classroom instruction. Notably, in all the aforementioned studies on teaching phrasal verbs, polysemous verbs, and idioms, the experimental groups that received conceptual metaphor instruction consistently outperformed the control groups, with further details provided in Section 4.1.

2.3. Previous Research on Teaching Metaphors through CMT

The case study in this article builds on Saaty's (2016) research, which explores the use of CMT in teaching metaphorical expressions. What sets Saaty's study apart from the others discussed is its incorporation of a detailed lesson plan based on task-based language teaching (TBLT) methodology. By combining CMT with a structured TBLT approach, Saaty's study not only evaluates CMT's effectiveness but also offers practical tips for teaching metaphors in the EFL classroom. As noted

in Section 2.1, Littlemore and Low (2006, 200–201) recommend using realistic, structured tasks with clear objectives to raise metaphor awareness that aligns with the TBLT framework.

To provide background, it is essential to review the task-based language teaching (TBLT) framework initially developed by Willis (1996), and later refined by Willis and Willis (2007). TBLT is defined as an approach that employs goal-oriented, interconnected tasks to support language learning within a meaningful context (Willis & Willis 2007, 21–22). The TBLT framework includes three main phases: the pre-task phase, which introduces the topic; the task cycle, which engages students in applying prior knowledge; and the post-task phase, where students study and practice new vocabulary (Willis & Willis 2007, 63–84). Both Saaty (2016) and the present case study employed a TBLT problem-solving teaching session, where learners seek and provide advice on topics that range from broad issues, such as environmental concerns, to specific ones, such as teenage challenges. This type of lesson plan fosters discussion, solution development, and target vocabulary acquisition (Willis & Willis 2007, 93–94). For this type of lesson, the recommended sequence includes a Task and Report phase, where small groups share solutions on the given topic; a Text Task, where students read a short passage on the topic to prompt further discussion; and a Language Focus phase, where the teacher introduces new vocabulary, which students then apply in practice (Willis & Willis 2007, 94–99).

Turning to Saaty's (2016, 127–168) study, it focuses on teaching metaphorical expressions under the conceptual metaphor *time is money* to 67 upper-intermediate Saudi learners of English. This study is more comprehensive than other related studies, as it includes a pre-test, a TBLT-based classroom session, a post-test, a two-week delayed test, and an evaluation survey. The TBLT teaching sessions differed for the experimental and control groups: the experimental group was introduced to conceptual metaphors, which emphasized how the *time is money* metaphor underlies the target expressions, while the control group was taught using a time management theme without metaphorical emphasis (Saaty 2016, 142–146). Saaty (2016, 154) found that the experimental group, taught with the CMT-based lesson, significantly outperformed the control group on the immediate post-test, which suggests enhanced comprehension and retention of metaphorical expressions. However, both groups showed notable declines in retention on the two-week delayed test, which suggested that the long-term benefits of this approach may be limited (Saaty 2016, 155). The follow-up questionnaire included Likert-scale items, which Saaty (2016)

adapted from Li's (2002) study on idioms, along with open-ended questions about teaching methodology. Results indicated that both groups found the TBLT method effective for teaching metaphorical expressions, regardless of CMT exposure (Saaty 2016, 159–163). Section 4 will present a detailed comparison between Saaty's (2016) results and those of the present case study.

The only other study that has employed a TBLT framework to teach metaphorical expressions through the CMT-based approach is Niemeier's (2017) work, which focused on conceptual metaphors with colour-related source domains like *sad is blue*, exemplified by *to feel blue*, with 26 intermediate German learners of English. During the lesson, students had the opportunity to trace these expressions back to their underlying conceptual metaphors and clarify previously ambiguous and subjective relationships between the colour-based source domain and the expressions' meanings (Niemeier 2017, 273–274, 280). While Saaty's (2016) results demonstrated the effectiveness of the CMT-based lesson primarily for immediate retention, Niemeier's research highlighted its impact on long-term retention as well. A three-week delayed gap-filling test showed generally positive vocabulary retention; however, the author notes a major limitation of the study, namely the absence of a control group, which unfortunately restricts the statistical reliability of the findings (Niemeier 2017, 280).

To summarize, the survey of previous studies demonstrated that the use of CMT, particularly when integrated into structured frameworks like TBLT, can enhance students' comprehension and retention of metaphorical expressions. The TBLT framework likely enhances retention because it engages learners in meaningful, goal-oriented tasks that promote deeper cognitive processing and provides opportunities to practice and apply new vocabulary in practical contexts. However, while promising, these findings also highlight limitations in long-term retention and the need for further research to establish the statistical reliability and broader applicability of this approach in varied instructional settings.

3. A Case Study of Georgian EFL Learners: Design and Methodology

This section presents a case study on teaching metaphorical expressions to Georgian advanced EFL learners. It examines the efficacy of conceptual metaphor awareness in their learning outcomes and addresses the following research questions:

1. How does the metaphor awareness of Georgian EFL learners improve after being taught metaphorical expressions through the CMT-based approach?

2. How does incorporating the CMT within a TBLT framework enhance the awareness of the 14 metaphorical expressions under scrutiny motivated by the conceptual metaphor *moods are weather*?
3. How do participants assess the effectiveness of the TBLT methodology and the conceptual metaphor approach in enhancing their language proficiency?

The study, conducted over four weeks, involved 24 advanced EFL students from Georgia, allocated to the control and metaphor groups. Data was collected through three metaphor production tests and a feedback questionnaire. The design of this experimental study is adapted from Saaty's (2016) dissertation on teaching L2 metaphors through awareness-raising activities, which includes four distinct experimental studies. Specifically, this study adopts the design from Study 2 (Saaty 2016, 127–168).

The research design of the current study was carefully developed to address key limitations identified in previous studies and specifically aimed to fill gaps in the existing literature through several novel elements. First, whereas prior studies primarily examined intermediate or elementary-level participants, this study focused on C1 advanced learners to offer insights into a higher proficiency level. Second, while most previous studies lacked a dedicated teaching session or methodological framework, the current study implemented a comprehensive TBLT framework, which provides practical pedagogical tips for integrating the CMT-based approach into classroom instruction. Additionally, unlike earlier studies that mainly evaluated the retention and comprehension of metaphorical expressions, this study tested the cued production of metaphorical expressions through an open-ended cloze task, which required participants to fill in the gaps independently without being given a list of possible words.

3.1. Participants

The participants in this study were 24 Georgian university students, aged 20 to 21, whose first language was Georgian and who were learning English as a foreign language. All participants, consisting of 21 females and 3 males, were second-year English majors at a Georgian university. Prior to the experiment, the students took the *Oxford Placement Test* and were classified at the C1 advanced level. Detailed information about the *Oxford Placement Test* is provided on their website.[2]

[2] https://www.oxfordenglishtesting.com/oupbos/showcontent/2480

The participants were then randomly assigned to the metaphor group (16 students) and the control group (8 students). Due to a limited number of eligible participants, a greater number of students were placed in the metaphor group to allow for a more reliable and detailed examination of the instructional approach being tested. Throughout the four-week study, all participants remained in their assigned groups, with no absences at any experiment stage. After the students were fully informed about the research, they provided verbal consent, understanding that this research study would not affect their university course grades. They were also assured that, although they had to write their names on the test papers, their identities would remain confidential during the analysis.

3.2. Selection of Metaphorical Expressions

Notably, previous research on teaching through CMT has focused on the following conceptual metaphors: *happy is up*, *sad is down*, *possessing something is holding*, *anger is fire*, and *time is money*. While the metaphorical expressions associated with these conceptual metaphors were suitable for teaching and assessing metaphor awareness among elementary and intermediate EFL learners, they might not provide sufficient challenge for advanced learners. Therefore, this study incorporates a more suitable conceptual metaphor for advanced proficiency: *moods are weather*. Consequently, the target metaphorical expressions for this study consist of 14 items that share metaphorical connections to the overarching conceptual metaphor *moods are weather*. This broad metaphor includes several specific conceptual metaphors, such as *storm is aggressive behaviour* and *sunny is cheerful*. To collect the target expressions, I used books where metaphorical expressions are organized by topic, specifically Wright (2002), which includes a chapter titled "Moods Are Weather," and Lazar (2003), which features two related chapters: "A Warm Welcome: Weather" and "Breezing Through: Weather." Additionally, I referred to an article by Gutiérrez Pérez (2016, 13–14), in which the author lists conceptual metaphors related to the source domain *weather conditions* along with their constituent metaphorical expressions.

Table 1 categorizes the 14 expressions used in the study, along with their definitions and corresponding conceptual metaphors. These expressions encompass collocations, phrasal verbs, and idioms, and they demonstrate the diverse ways weather-related language conveys aspects of mood and emotion. Initially, the plan was to exclude idioms and focus solely on metaphorical expressions; however, this

approach would have resulted in a very limited selection. As a result, the final list includes seven idioms.

	Metaphorical Expression	Meaning	Conceptual Metaphor
1.	storm in/into	to enter or leave a place in a way that shows that you are angry	storm is aggressive behaviour
2.	breeze in/into	to walk into a place quickly and confidently, without worry or embarrassment	breeze is confident behaviour
3.	rainy day	a future time of need, esp. financial	rain is misfortune
4.	cloud over	if a person's face clouds over, they suddenly look unhappy or worried	cloud is present or forthcoming problems
5.	snowed under	having too much to do	snow is lack of time
6.	sunny disposition	someone who has a sunny disposition is usually cheerful and happy	sunny is cheerful
7.	warm up	to become friendlier or more receptive	warmth is affection
8.	warm welcome	a hearty, hospitable reception or greeting	
9.	frosty reception	unfriendly and not welcoming	cold/frost/ice is lack of affection/ unfriendliness
10.	icy look/voice	an icy remark, look etc. shows that you feel annoyed with or unfriendly towards someone	
11.	shower someone with something	to give someone a lot of presents or praise	shower is too much of something
12.	not have the foggiest (idea/memory)	to not know or understand something at all	fog is confusion
13.	throw caution to the wind	to ignore the risks and deliberately behave in a way that may cause trouble or problems	wind is lack of restraint
14.	under the weather	if someone is or feels under the weather, they feel ill	weather is health

Table 1. Metaphorical expressions used in the study

To assess whether the difficulty level of the chosen expressions was suitable for advanced English learners, a pilot study was conducted with the help of a fill-in-the-gap task. The pilot study aimed to determine whether advanced proficiency students were unfamiliar with the selected metaphorical expressions or already possessed prior knowledge of them. If the expressions had been too easy for advanced learners, teaching and testing their knowledge would have been ineffective. Consequently, pilot tests that involved the 14 target expressions were administered to 22 Hungarian and 10 Georgian second-year English Studies majors. Hungarian students were included in the pilot test because they were a readily available group during the initial phase of the research, whereas recruiting Georgian participants required more time due to locational constraints. Importantly, the participants in both groups were selected for their similar level of English proficiency. The pilot study results, with an average score of 4.31 out of 14 across all participants, demonstrated that the expressions were challenging enough and appropriate for teaching and assessing metaphor awareness among advanced learners.

3.3. Experiment Time Frame

The study was structured as a four-week experiment, during which the pre-test, teaching session, post-test, evaluation survey, and delayed test were conducted across consecutive weeks. A detailed timeline that outlines the activities for both the control and metaphor groups is presented in Table 2.

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Control group</th><th>Metaphor group</th></tr>
<tr><td>Week I
(04.10.2024)</td><td colspan="2">Verbal consent
Pre-test</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Week II
(11.10.2024)
At 10:00 for CG
At 14:00 for MG</td><td colspan="2">Teaching session that consists of
1. Pre-task: daily mood journal and discussion</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">2. Reading task: advice on mood swings</td></tr>
<tr><td>3. Language focus: Teaching the 14 metaphorical expressions through the theme of mood/behaviour</td><td>3. Language focus: Teaching the 14 metaphorical expressions through conceptual metaphor awareness</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Immediate post-test</td></tr>
<tr><td>Week III
(18.10.2024)</td><td colspan="2">Survey for evaluation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Week IV
(25.10.2024)</td><td colspan="2">Delayed test (two weeks later)</td></tr>
</table>

Table 2. Schedule of the study

3.4. Lesson Plan

I designed the lesson plan around the overarching conceptual metaphor *moods are weather* to teach the 14 target metaphorical expressions, as listed in Table 1. The lesson, titled *Mood Swings*, is based on the TBLT framework and addresses challenges learners may encounter with mood swings, including their causes, risk factors, and coping strategies. In creating the lesson plan, I again referred to relevant chapters from Wright (2002) and Lazar (2003). For the reading task, I adapted a blog article on mood swings from the *Cleveland Clinic* website.[3]

A major part of the lesson is the same for both groups; however, the main difference between the control and metaphor groups lies in the approach to teaching the metaphorical expressions in parts three, four, and six of the lesson. Part three involves individual reading, and part four consists of individual/pair planning, with differing instructions for the control and metaphor groups. For example, in part three, the control group is instructed to underline words and phrases they believe are related to *mood* or *behaviour*, such as "frosty reception," whereas the metaphor group is asked to underline words and phrases they think are related to either *mood/behaviour* or *weather*, such as "frosty reception," which describes the *reception* as being *frosty*, as if it were *weather*.

Part six, the language focus section, differs the most between the two groups. The control group learners were introduced to the 14 target metaphorical expressions through a list that included their definitions and example sentences. The metaphor group learners, by contrast, were briefly introduced to what conceptual metaphors are and how they influence our thinking and language. They were then taught the same 14 target expressions with the help of a list with their definitions, organized under their constituent conceptual metaphors. A copy of the complete 1.5-hour lesson plan for both groups is included in Appendix 1.

3.5. Metaphor Production Tests and Questionnaire

Two cloze tests were created to evaluate the students' awareness of the 14 target metaphorical expressions. The first test served as both a pre-test and a two-week delayed test, while the second test was used as a post-test. The original pre-test/delayed test can be found in Appendix 2, and the original post-test is in Appendix 3. In both tests, students were asked to complete the sentences by filling each gap

[3] https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/symptoms/mood-swings (Accessed October 1, 2024).

with a single word. The sentences were adapted from authentic examples found in the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).

It is important to note that, similar to Saaty's (2016) test format, the current study employs an open-ended cloze task that requires learners to supply the missing metaphor without any given options. This format allows for the assessment of cued production of metaphors. In contrast, previous research on teaching through CMT primarily employed multiple-choice tasks, fill-in-the-blank tasks with word banks, or underline the correct word tasks, which assess only metaphor retention and comprehension rather than independent production.

Lastly, to evaluate the teaching methodology from the participants' perspective, an evaluation questionnaire was administered during the third week of the study. The questionnaire design was adapted from Saaty (2016), who based the Likert scale items on Li's (2002) study and included four open-ended questions to gather feedback on the overall lesson experience and suggestions for improvement. The original questionnaire for the current study is provided in Appendix 4.

3.6. Procedures and Data Analysis

Two phases of data analysis were conducted to examine the effects of teaching the metaphorical expressions using the CMT-based approach. The results of the control group were compared with those of the metaphor group. First, the number of correct answers on the pre-tests, post-tests, and two-week delayed tests for both groups was counted, and the results from each pair of tests were compared to identify any patterns or differences. Second, to better understand the participants' viewpoints, the answers to the learning experience questionnaire were analyzed and compared. Together, these analyses provided both quantitative and qualitative results on the effectiveness of the CMT-based instructional approach, the details of which are discussed in Section 4.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Metaphor Test Results

To assess the learning outcomes, learners from both the metaphor and control groups completed a metaphor cloze test that comprised the 14 taught metaphorical expressions based on the *moods are weather* conceptual metaphor. Their performance

in the pre-tests, post-tests, and two-week delayed tests was evaluated by counting and analyzing the number of correct answers, with a maximum possible score of 14 on each test. An independent samples t-test was administered to compare the mean scores between the metaphor and control groups at each testing phase. Table 3 presents the participant count (n), average scores (M), standard deviations (SD), and t-test significance values (t). Additionally, Figure 1 illustrates the differences in average scores across the three tests in the form of a chart.

	Control Group (n=8)	**Metaphor Group** (n=16)	**Test Statistics**
Pre-test	M=1.25 SD= 0.89	M=1.31 SD= 0.87	t(22)=-0.164, p=0.871
Post-test	M=7.75 SD=0.71	M=12.94 SD= 0.98	t(22)=-13.083, p<0.001
Delayed test (two weeks later)	M=4.38 SD=1.19	M=10.75 SD=1.13	t(22)=-12.855, p<0.001

Table 3. Average scores for pre-tests, post-tests, and two-week delayed tests

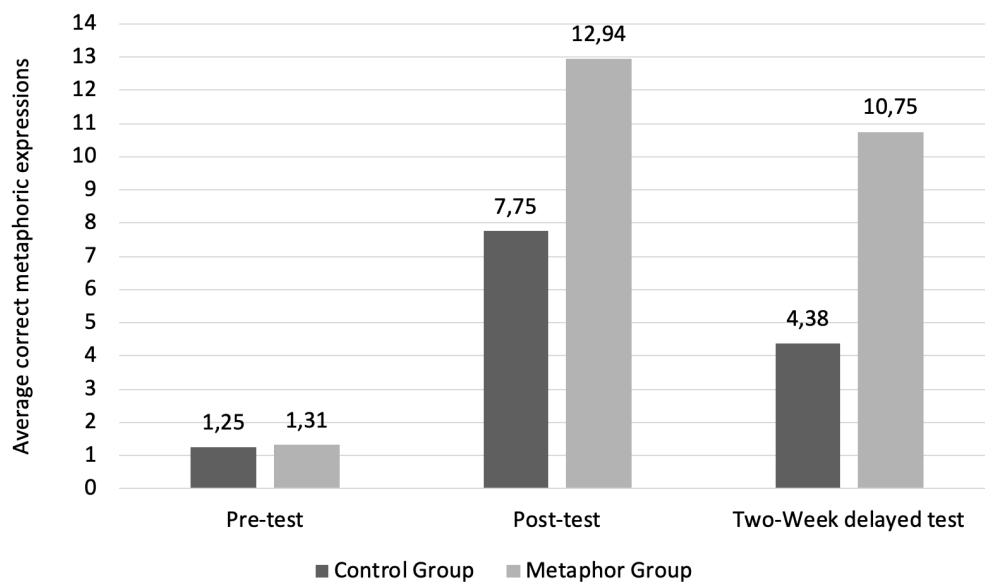

Figure 1. The differences in average scores across the three tests

Table 3 and Figure 1 demonstrate that the metaphor group had a mean pre-test score of 1.31, whereas the control group obtained a mean score of 1.25. The results show no apparent distinction between the compared groups ($t(22)=-0.164$, $p=0.871$). This consistency in the results guarantees that any differences in later assessments can be accurately ascribed to the teaching session rather than to pre-existing variations in the learners' knowledge of the target metaphorical expressions.

After completing the pre-test, both groups participated in a TBLT session, where the key difference was that the metaphor group's instructions incorporated conceptual metaphor awareness, whereas the control group's did not. The post-test results, shown in Table 3 and Figure 1, reveal a significant difference between the groups: the control group achieved an average score of 7.75, while the metaphor group scored 12.94, which is nearly twice as high. An independent samples t-test also confirmed that this difference is statistically significant, $t(22)=-13.083$, $p<0.001$. These results suggest that incorporating the conceptual metaphor approach helped the metaphor group better understand the 14 target metaphorical expressions compared to the control group.

These findings are in line with the main study that served as the basis for this experiment. According to Saaty's (2016, 152–154) post-test results, the metaphor group averaged 8.68 out of a potential score of 17, while the control group averaged 4.73. However, it is important to note that while both studies demonstrate nearly double the performance for the metaphor group compared to the control group, the overall performance of the metaphor group is higher in the current study, where learners answered approximately 92.4% of the test correctly, compared to Saaty's (2016, 152–154) study, where learners answered only 51.1% of the test correctly. This distinction in overall performance might be attributed to the difference in proficiency levels, as the advanced English learners in the current study may have benefited more from the teaching through the CMT compared to the intermediate-level learners in Saaty's (2016) study.

When it comes to other studies on teaching using the CMT-based approach (Kövecses & Szabó 1996; Boers 2000; Li 2002; Boers et al. 2004; Csábi 2004; Condon 2008; Beréndi et al. 2008; Pan 2019), the results are also aligned, as all the studies found that metaphor groups outperformed the control groups in immediate post-tests.

To evaluate the long-term effectiveness of the experiment, a delayed test, which was identical to the pre-test, was administered to both groups two weeks after the post-test. As shown in Table 3 and Figure 1, the control group achieved a mean score of 4.38, while the metaphor group scored significantly higher, with a mean

of 10.75 – more than double the control group's average. The metaphor group's significant outperformance of the control group, evident in the two-week delayed tests, mirrors the pattern observed in the immediate post-tests and suggests that the CMT-based teaching continued to enhance the cued production of metaphorical expressions over the longer term. On the other hand, as is often the case with delayed tests, scores decreased in both groups between the post-test and the two-week delayed test; however, the control group experienced a larger decline, with a mean decrease of 3.37 compared to the metaphor group's mean decrease of 2.19. The smaller decline in the metaphor group's scores further supports the effectiveness of the CMT-based lesson for the long-term retention of metaphorical expressions. It is also possible that reduced motivation or test fatigue during the follow-up stage contributed to this overall decline.

The outcomes of the two-week delayed tests in this study differ from Saaty's (2016, 155–157) findings, where both the metaphor and control groups demonstrated very low overall scores. In Saaty's study, the control group achieved a mean score of only 2.17, while the metaphor group scored 2.32 out of a maximum of 17 (Saaty 2016, 155–157). This suggests that neither the TBLT teaching method nor TBLT combined with the CMT-based approach effectively supported the long-term retention of metaphorical expressions. This difference could once again be attributed to the difference in proficiency levels, as the advanced English learners in the current study may have gained greater long-term benefits from the CMT-based teaching approach compared to the intermediate-level learners in Saaty's (2016) study.

Other studies on teaching through the CMT-based approach rarely use delayed tests, primarily because it is challenging to recruit all participants after some time has passed since the experiment. However, Li (2002, 184–185) and Pan (2019, 70–72) used one-week delayed tests in their studies, both of which showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group. These studies provide evidence for the medium- or long-term benefits of the CMT-based teaching and align with the findings of the current study. On the other hand, Condon (2006, 148–149), who utilized six-week delayed tests, did not find any significant difference between the performance of the experimental and control groups in the delayed post-test and did not find any evidence of long-term benefits, similar to the findings of Saaty (2016). Differences in delayed test results across these studies may be influenced by the varying time intervals used. Shorter intervals, such as the one-week delayed tests in Li (2002) and Pan (2019), may better capture the retention benefits of CMT-based teaching, whereas longer intervals, such as the six-week test in Condon (2006) and

the two-week test in Saaty (2016), suggest that these retention benefits fade over time. Another explanation could be that Condon's (2006) participants had limited practice with the target items and lacked a comprehensive teaching session. Alternatively, as discussed earlier, the long-term retention benefits of the CMT-based lesson may be more effective for advanced proficiency learners, as seen in the current study, compared to intermediate learners in the studies by Condon (2006) and Saaty (2016).

4.2. Questionnaire Results

The participants' evaluation questionnaire assessed their perceptions of the teaching session and methodology. Statistical methods were used for the closed-ended questions, and qualitative methods were used for the open-ended ones (see Appendix 4 for the original questionnaire). The closed-item questions asked participants to evaluate five aspects of the *Mood Swings* lesson: the informativeness and novelty of the learning material, the novelty of the teaching method, its effectiveness in aiding vocabulary memorization, and its potential to increase vocabulary. Responses were measured on a Likert scale, where 1 indicated "Strongly Disagree" and 5 indicated "Strongly Agree". I analyzed the average scores from the control and metaphor groups and found no notable differences in how the two groups evaluated their experiences. Figure 2 provides a detailed depiction of the variations in the average scores for each of the five individual closed-item questions.

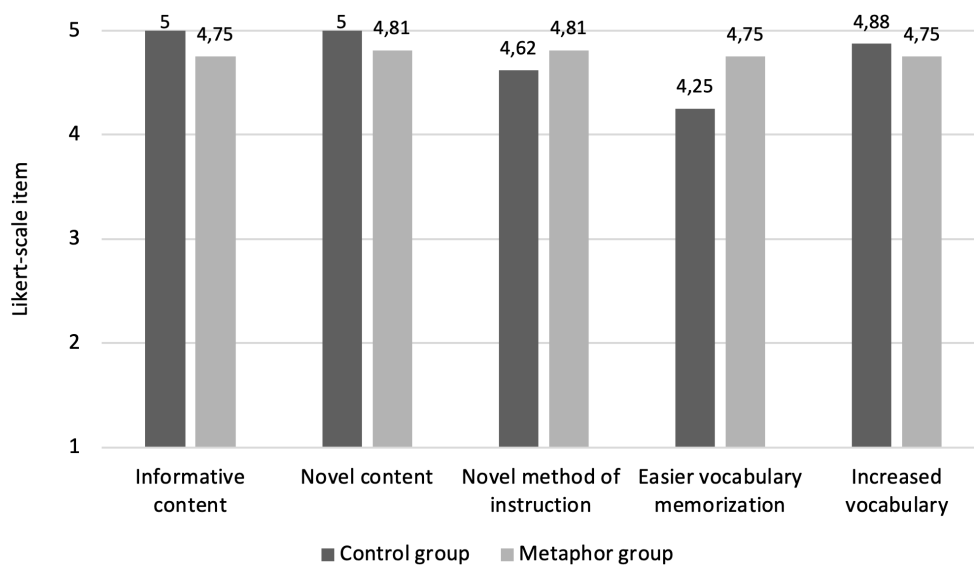

Figure 2. Average scores of closed-ended questions in the evaluation survey

As shown in Figure 2, both the control (n= 8, M= 4.75) and metaphor groups (n= 16, M= 4.77) expressed overall agreement and positive feedback on the five individual items in the questionnaire. This suggests that the TBLT approach to teaching metaphorical expressions was well-received and considered effective, regardless of whether the CMT was incorporated. These results are consistent with Saaty's (2016, 159–163) findings, where all participants also rated the TBLT-based teaching of metaphorical expressions as highly satisfactory.

I analyzed participants' responses from the open-ended section of the survey and identified three central themes: strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement. This section examines these themes based on the feedback from learners in both groups, including excerpts from their evaluations.

All learners in both the control and metaphor groups responded "yes" to the first open-ended question, "Do you enjoy learning English vocabulary through a task-based approach (i.e., learning vocabulary in the context of other skills and engaging in lifelike tasks)? Why?" In their explanations for this response, they expressed a generally positive evaluation of the task-based learning method and provided favourable comments such as "It feels more practical and real," "It kept me engaged and focused," "I learn faster in real situations," "It's more exciting than typical lessons."

In response to the second question, "What are the things you liked about the Mood Swings lesson?" all participants provided one or two key points. However, the themes of their responses differed between the control and metaphor groups. The control group primarily highlighted aspects such as the lesson's topic, its instructiveness, and practicality. For example, their comments included, "the relatable topic," "It was very interactive," and "Useful for daily conversations." While the metaphor group also acknowledged these aspects, their responses primarily centred on conceptual metaphor awareness. This suggests that the explicit instruction on conceptual metaphors enhanced their ability to identify and understand the figurative meanings of the taught expressions. For example, "It helped me to see how English language uses weather-related words to talk about emotions and mood," "Identifying the meaning of expressions was like solving a puzzle," "I enjoyed learning the hidden layers of phrases and words," "Linking words to weather made everything clearer," "Seeing emotions as weather helped me connect ideas."

For the third question, "What are the things you did not like about the Mood Swings lesson?" no significant thematic differences emerged between the two groups. Among the 24 participants, seven left the question unanswered, while eight stated that they liked everything about the lesson. The remaining nine students indicated in

their feedback that the lesson felt slightly lengthy. For example: "The Mood Log was time-consuming," "Lesson was a bit long," "I would shorten the text."

The final question, "Is there anything you would change about the Mood Swings lesson?" similarly revealed no significant thematic differences between the two groups. Five students left it blank and six said that they would not change anything. The remaining eleven students indicated in their feedback that videos and visuals could enhance engagement, and a feedback session at the end of the lesson would be beneficial. For example, "Add some video, maybe," "Add feedback at the end of the lesson."

In summary, the survey showed that both groups responded favourably to the TBLT method for teaching metaphorical expressions, with comments on the approach being largely positive. Significantly, answers to the second question, "What are the things you liked about the Mood Swings lesson?" showed a distinct difference. The metaphor group emphasized how knowing about conceptual metaphors can have a powerful influence, which they found to be both interesting and helpful for comprehending figurative meanings. Meanwhile, the control group highlighted the lesson's topic, instructiveness, and practicality. This distinction shows that the conceptual metaphor approach helps advanced learners develop a deeper understanding of figurative language and its underlying meanings.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to report the results of an experiment conducted with Georgian EFL learners to investigate the efficiency of CMT-based instruction integrated with TBLT methodology. Generally, the results indicate that employing the CMT-based approach in teaching metaphorical expressions enhances L2 learners' metaphor awareness. These findings align with those of Saaty (2016), whose study informed the design of the current research, as well as with other studies discussed in Section 2.2 of this article. Importantly, the case study of Georgian EFL learners addressed gaps in previous research in several ways. It focused on C1 advanced learners, implemented a comprehensive TBLT framework to integrate the CMT-based teaching into classroom instruction, and evaluated the cued production of metaphorical expressions through an open-ended cloze task.

The data analysis from all components of this four-week experiment, including the pre-test, post-test, two-week delayed test, and participant evaluation survey, reveals significant improvement in the metaphor awareness of Georgian EFL learners following explicit instruction on conceptual metaphors. Specifically, the

metaphor group achieved nearly twice the average score of the control group in the immediate post-tests and more than double the control group's average in the two-week delayed tests. Previous studies, such as Saaty (2016) and Condon (2006), demonstrated the effectiveness of the CMT-based teaching in immediate post-tests but noted a decline in its impact during delayed tests. In contrast, the findings of this study suggest that advanced English learners benefited from the CMT-based lesson in both the short and long term and attained better outcomes compared to the intermediate-level learners in the aforementioned studies. Therefore, incorporating the CMT-based teaching approach into English classrooms is highly recommended for C1 advanced learners to enhance their metaphor awareness and overall language proficiency. In line with this recommendation, the detailed lesson plan and tests developed for this case study provide a practical example of how teachers can implement CMT paired with TBLT methodology in the classroom.

Lastly, the participant evaluation questionnaire revealed that both the control and metaphor groups responded highly positively to the TBLT method for teaching metaphorical expressions. They appreciated it for being informative and introducing new material through an unfamiliar teaching method, which they found helpful for easier vocabulary retention and expansion. Interestingly, responses from the metaphor group about what they liked most about the lesson predominantly focused on the conceptual metaphors, which suggests that the CMT-based lesson had a strong impact on their overall experience in the teaching session.

It should be acknowledged that given the small sample size of EFL students in this experiment, the generalizability of the findings is limited. Several factors contributed to this limitation. For instance, it was difficult to access larger groups of advanced English learners, who were both willing to participate in a four-week experiment and available to take a proficiency test beforehand to confirm their level. In addition, the most suitable candidates were English majors, who had an uneven gender distribution.

Future research could expand the scope of the study to include a larger and more diverse participant pool with balanced gender representation. Additionally, longer-term delayed tests beyond two weeks could be incorporated to provide a better assessment of the CMT-based teaching efficacy. It would also be valuable to examine whether proficiency levels are the primary factor influencing the effectiveness of CMT-based lessons, or whether other variables contribute to the observed differences. Finally, future studies could explore EFL teachers' perspectives and experiences to better understand why the benefits of CMT-based instruction have not been more widely adopted within the profession.

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