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# Coherence Relations and Concept Dynamic in Learners' Personal Theories

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## Abstract

This article examines metaphorical conceptualizations of educational practices emerging from students' personal theories. Particular emphasis is placed upon coherence relations observable between and among individual constructs forming an Idealized Cognitive Model of the teaching/learning process. It is postulated that learners' metaphors are built around unpredictable and varied inferences, often resulting from cognitive dissonance between novel experience and entrenched cultural models. Moreover, the image surfacing from learners' analogies is characterized by internal dynamics, which may well indicate that students' discourse is particularly susceptible to new extralinguistic stimuli. Consequently, while linguistic metaphors become more creative, conceptual blueprints are modified to encompass emerging meanings. Thus, the popular notions about language and language learning which are frequently transmitted from teachers' jargon to students' talk are gradually giving way to modified, internalized and perpetuated concepts.

**Key words:** personal theories, conceptual metaphors, coherence, experientialism, new meaning.

## Resumen

Este artículo examina las conceptualizaciones de la prácticas educacionales que emergen de las teorías personales de los estudiantes. Se hace particular hincapié en las relaciones de coherencia que se observan entre los constructos individuales que forman un Modelo Cognitivo Idealizado del proceso de enseñanza /aprendizaje. Se propone la idea que las metáforas del alumnado se construyen alrededor de inferencias no predecibles y variadas que a menudo provienen de una disonancia cog-

nitiva entre una experiencia novedosa y modelos culturales anteriores. Además, la imagen que aparece en las analogías del alumnado se caracteriza por una dinámica interna, que bien puede indicar que el discurso de los estudiantes es particularmente susceptible a influencias extralingüísticas nuevas. En consecuencia, mientras las metáforas lingüísticas se hacen más creativas, se modifican los mapas conceptuales para incluir significados emergentes. Así, las nociones populares sobre lenguaje y el aprendizaje del lenguaje que se transmiten con frecuencia de la jerga de los profesores al habla de los estudiantes dan lugar gradualmente a conceptos modificados, asumidos y perpetuados.

**Palabras clave:** teorías personales, metáforas conceptuales, coherencia, experientialismo, nuevos significados.

## 1. Introduction

Recently, there has been a heightened awareness of the role personal theories play in applied linguistics research (see, for instance, Lortie, 1975, Marchant, 1992, Marshall, 1990, Munby, 1987, and Richards, 1998). Individual narratives are seen as insightful means of exploring personal systems of values and beliefs. Personal theories are intertwined with the notion of conceptual metaphors, as defined by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Metaphors are recognized not only for their pervasiveness in the language of the teaching profession but also for their ability to capture complex constructs and their utility as vehicles for reflection and consciousness raising (see, for example, Cameron and Low, 1999, 1999a).

This article examines conceptual metaphors in learners' educational discourse. Special emphasis is laid upon coherence relations obtaining across concepts and cognitive dynamics thus resulting. The study is conducted within a theoretical framework reconciling experiential and socio-cultural approaches to metaphor.

## 2. Conceptual Metaphors

Metaphor has always constituted an indispensable part of the inquiry into how people use language to express thought. Current research in Cognitive (Experiential) Linguistics emphasizes the conceptual potential of metaphor. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 5), metaphor pervades everyday language as well as human thoughts and actions. Its essence is comprehending and experiencing one

concept, typically more abstract, in terms of another one, which is directly emergent. Metaphorical understanding is achieved via establishing a set of correspondences (mappings) between the two domains involved.

Another type of co-relation involved in metaphorical thinking are entailments, which Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 98) define as rich knowledge structures reflecting our commonsensical, naïve picture of the world. To illustrate the difference between a mapping and an entailment, let us look at the *TEACHER AS A GUIDE* metaphor. Conventional mappings might match teachers and guides, students and travellers, knowledge and landscape, progress and path, whereas entailments would highlight more detailed elements in the source domain, for instance, the shape of the path or the direction of movement.

Conceptual metaphors can give rise to systematic groupings, namely metaphor sets, characterized by internal systematicity and external coherence, both of which may entail image-schematic concepts, as defined by Johnson (1987).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 139-145) postulate that the potential of metaphors can be extended beyond capturing conventionalised patterns of thought. Metaphors can be imaginative and creative, thus giving us a new understanding of experiential stimuli. New metaphors, e.g. *LOVE IS A COLLABORATIVE WORK OF ART*, should then be viewed as means of highlighting novel aspects of experience and, simultaneously, creating new realities. Still, changing the metaphors we live by is by no means a smooth transition. Therefore, people are more likely to use untraditional linguistic expressions to refer to conventionalised concepts. For example, in the present study, teachers will be referred to as deer, distant and aloof, or as hunters, shooting at the learner's ignorance. However original these linguistic expressions may seem, they are nothing but a fanciful façade beyond which fossilized conceptions can be found.

Conceptual metaphors are closely tied to a cultural and social milieu in which they operate. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 142), conventional metaphors define a particular socio-cultural status quo. The meaning of novel metaphors, in turn, is determined in part by the culture and in part by the personal experience of the user. In the same vein, Vygotsky (1978) views conventional metaphors as important cultural artefacts —products of a specific set of traditions— which, through social interactions, become adapted for use in the construction of personal understandings. However, as Guerrero and Villamil (2002: 99) rightly observe, metaphor

appropriation does not consist in merely copying the metaphorical units sanctioned by a particular community. Culturally shared metaphors are subject to fluctuation due to various personal experiences of individuals and the multifarious social discourses they are exposed to.

### ***2.1. Metaphor and the teaching/learning process***

The structuring power of metaphors has surfaced in the works of linguists and philosophers alike. Socrates (c. 470 BC-399 BC) is believed to have coined a precursory metaphor of educational practice, whereby “education is the kindling of the flame, not the filling of a vessel.” According to Rousseau (1712-1778), “plants are shaped by cultivation and men by education. The ubiquitous metaphor of “*tabula rasa*”, attributed to John Locke (1632-1704), stipulates that the child’s mind be perceived as an empty slate, gradually inscribed due to the process of learning and experience-gaining. According to Ungerer and Schmid (1996: 143), the teaching/learning process can, by all means, be viewed as an abstract construct whose comprehension can be facilitated by the use of conceptual metaphors. Elliot (1984) discusses some of the central metaphorical associations that have traditionally been made with education. Some of the most common similes which he elaborates on view education as formation or production, as preparation or apprenticeship, as initiation, guidance, growth, and liberation.

Currently, numerous studies into the metaphorical nature of educational practices are offered (see, for example, Cameron and Low, 1999, Cie licka, 2002, Oxford *et al.*, 1998, Siek-Piskozub and Strugielska, 2007, Werbińska, 2005). The analyses available can be defined along a distinctive set of parameters. First of all, the studies are evidently teacher-centred since the data comes solely from the instructor and, consequently, the model of education is often metonymically presented in terms of the construct of teaching. For example, Musiał (2002: 477) suggests that the TEACHING IS CREATING metaphor functions as a superordinate metonym for the following linguistic manifestations: *Teaching is like sculpting/composing music/carving wood; The teacher is like a sculptor; Learners are like flower buds/unexplored territory.* Moreover, the metaphors discussed seem to constitute quite a variety: some of them employ common concepts but others exploit more original images (e.g. teaching likened to opening a box full of worms). Still, the concepts to be found behind the

linguistic expressions provided are predominantly fossilized constructs traditionally employed to refer to educational practices (e.g. guiding, instructing, facilitating or controlling, transmitting and creating). What is new are only particular aspects of the teachers' experience, which have not yet been sanctioned as conventional mappings. Finally, as Werbińska (2005: 4047) points out, some metaphors of the teaching/learning process are consistent with each other but others seem not to belong to an overall conceptualization. The crucial point, then, appears to be establishing the degree of coherence between individual constructs forming the Idealized Cognitive Model of educational practice (Lakoff 1987).

## ***2.2. Coherence of metaphorical concepts***

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 98-102), coherence relations between metaphorical constructs vary from perfect consistency to inferential links drawing upon shared entailments.

Consequently, one of the most important aspects of a metaphor is the roles it creates for self and others. Thus, if I am a shepherd, my students must be sheep. If I am a gardener, my students are plants. The above-presented logic seems to dominate the educational discourse of theoreticians. Dakowska (2005: 151) stipulates that the CLASSROOM AS A HOTHOUSE metaphor necessarily entails the images of the TEACHER AS A GARDENER and STUDENTS AS PLANTS.

This Idealized Cognitive Model of the teaching/learning process is not fully confirmed by the data elicited from practitioners. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest, conceptual metaphors do not usually work in isolation. Most frequently, when people discuss a highly abstract and elaborate concept, they also use other concepts that are metaphorically understood. The reason for this, according to Lakoff and Johnson, is that "there is no one metaphor that will do the job" (1980: 105). Guerrero and Villamil's research (2002) confirms that metaphors are complex constructs with overlapping entailments. According to their data, teachers are heavily influenced by their professional culture. Conventional metaphors surfacing in textbooks and academic jargon cannot fail to influence educators' conceptual matrices. Interestingly, those intangible foundations of mental structures are frequently inconsistent or even contradictory. Guerrero and Villamil (2002: 115-116) assert an obvious impact of heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981) on the process of metaphor



appropriation. Thus, teachers' personal theories are formed around distinctive cultural artefacts, which are internalised, reconstructed and transformed. Since the influence of personal experience cannot be denied a role in the overall process, the thus resulting metaphorical systems are, at least partly, unique. Moreover, the reflections which teachers have upon education can frequently be viewed as blends of constructs, the occurrence of which can be attributed to the impact of various theoretical paradigms (e.g. positivism, constructivism).

All in all, it appears that teachers' personal theories are governed by their multifaceted professional experience. The educational know-how is, however, frequently mediated by personal insights, the result being a fluctuating amalgamate of knowledge. Still, it seems that current research strives to establish coherence relations between and among individual constructs forming the educational ICM. Despite admitting a variety of stimuli responsible for the emergence of an image of the teacher, Guerrero and Villamil (2002) provide a uniform string of concepts entailed by teacher-oriented metaphors. For instance, the TEACHER AS AN ARTIST conceptualisation leads to necessary inferences concerning the learner (as raw material) and the process of teaching (as creating).

In what follows, coherence relations are going to be re-examined with reference to learners' personal theories. The impact of new experience upon consistency links will be particularly stressed.

### ***2.3. Learners' narratives***

The current study is going to concentrate on learners' personal theories related to the educational practices they have been exposed to. In view of the fact that learners have recently become autonomous centres of constructivist classrooms (see, for example, Benson 2001 and Gremmo 1998), surprisingly little research can be found concerning the students' conceptual metaphors of education. Strugielska (in press) evaluates learners' constructs with reference to their internal coherence and relative stability. The results of her research suggest that students' personal theories of education are characterized by an overall lack of consistency (72% of the data). If, however, the constructs happen to be logically interconnected, the inferential links are highly formulaic in character (e.g. THE TEACHER IS A GUIDE; THE LEARNER IS A TRAVELLER; THE LESSON IS A JOURNEY). Moreover, Strugielska and Siek-Piskozub (in press) imply that learners' internal narratives are

susceptible to new experiential stimuli. The data analysed clearly suggest that a new educational context (the university) may destabilize most fossilized constructs built upon secondary school experience. Finally, Siek-Piskozub and Strugielska (2007) point to the systematizing role of new experience. In view of the results obtained in their study, students exposed to constructivist classes were able to produce theories far more coherent than those in the control group. To be more precise, an increase of 32% was noticed in coherence relations produced by the experimental group.

The creation and dissemination of learners' personal theories, as well as their subsequent reformulation, acquisition and perpetuation, is thus believed to be considerably motivated by new experience and the mechanisms of cognitive dissonance.

### **2.3.1. Cognitive dissonance**

As Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 146) state:

Metaphors may create realities for us, especially social realities. A metaphor may thus be a guide for future action. Such actions will, of course, fit the metaphor. This will, in turn, reinforce the power of the metaphor to make experience coherent. In this sense metaphors can be self-fulfilling prophecies.

The opinion presented above seems perfectly compatible with the theory of cognitive dissonance, as presented, for instance, by Festinger (1957). While the theory of conceptual metaphor stresses the importance of coherence for metaphorical systematicity and reliability, the proponents of cognitive dissonance point to factors which may be responsible for upsetting the equilibrium between our concepts and the perceived reality.

Ross (1974:264) claims that the human conceptual system aims at harmony and, consequently, people tend to search for coherence in the new stimuli. Moreover, we are inclined to adjust novel experience to existing systems of values and beliefs. If, however, we fail to establish correspondences, cognitive dissonance emerges.

Festinger (1957:3) notices that a short-lasting psychological discomfort is typical of human cognition. Moreover, he points to various factors responsible for the state of mental anxiety, such as the impact of new experience and incongruities embedded in cultural backgrounds.

Consequently, we may establish links between psychological theories of cognitive dissonance and coherence relations holding among metaphorical concepts.

Namely, if we fail to establish consistency between the novel and the conventionalized, psychological discomfort is felt. Therefore, coherence relations should be re-instituted for mental harmony to be restored. This assumption is to be verified in the present study.

### 3. The Domain of the Study

The study was aimed at investigating university students' conceptions of the teaching/learning process by means of concentrating on their metaphors of the teacher/teaching, the learner/learning and the classroom. Metaphorical constructs were elicited by having the students complete the following sentences:

*The teacher is (like)...because...*

*Teaching is (like)...because...*

*The learner is (like)...because...*

*Learning is (like)...because...*

*The classroom is (like)...because...*

Individual responses were, first of all, systematically analysed in order to uncover the underlying conceptualisations. The generalizations thus obtained were subsequently evaluated with reference to their coherence at the levels of personal theories as well as complex systems. In other words, each set of 5 answers was classified with reference to the type of coherence it represented.

#### 3.1. The subjects

The study was longitudinal in character and involved first-year students in the Department of English of Nicolaus Copernicus University, Torun, Poland. The first set of 24 answers was collected in October 2007. Since the students were at the time not yet exposed to any educational experience in the university context, the data was taken as indicative of the respondents' previous learning background. The second set of answers was collected in June 2007, when the students had already undergone a full year of university instruction. Thus, the 21 samples obtained were taken as likely reflections of the respondents' new educational experience.

### **3.2. Initial hypotheses**

A small number of general hypotheses were formulated as a basis for initial searching. These were used as a guide for the identification of significant features of the samples obtained.

One of the clearest structural divisions in the data can be made along the coherence parameter. Consequently, the results vary in terms of internal logic, from perfect consistency through partial coherence to a complete absence of a logical link.

Furthermore, coherence relations are established on two different bases. Firstly, there is a number of metaphors interconnected via compatible mappings. For instance, the TEACHER AS A GUIDE metaphor renders both TEACHING AS SETTING A ROUTE and LEARNING AS TRAVELLING coherent within a particular cognitive model. Alternatively, coherence relations can be established on the basis of entailments. Thus, in the TEACHING AS IMPRISONING model, the metaphor of LEARNING AS FORCING FOOD will be viewed as related to the overall structure via configurations of rich knowledge.

Particular emphasis was laid on the students' comments since it was there that the roots of metaphorical pairings are detectable. In other words, it was assumed that that some of the similes obtained should be viewed as mere cultural artifacts reflecting fossilized patterns of thinking rather than deconstructed and internalized cognitive blueprints. This hypothesis was often confirmed in the data, whereby formulaic lexical phrases, e.g. THE LEARNER IS A CONTAINER, were not followed by any comments or explanations.

On the other hand, creative linguistic expressions were carefully scrutinized in order to make appropriate generalizations and, consequently, distinguish between novel and conventionalized patterns of thought.

Finally, it was assumed that the university educational experience would differ from the subjects' previous learning backgrounds. Hence, conceptual commotion resulting from a possible cognitive discomfort was expected. The above was likely to be observable in the students' metaphorical pairings and emphasized by the degree of coherence the mappings represented. All in all, in some cases, ensuing mental anxiety may well lead to changes in the students' conceptual systems, which would surface in the form of new meanings.

### 3.3. The results

The results of the study will be presented and analyzed individually for each set of answers.

#### 3.3.1. Set 1

TEACHER	TEACHING	LEARNER	LEARNING	CLASSROOM	TYPE OF COHERENCE
1. a guide	creating	clay	conquering new		
lands	a bag	teacher/learnings;			
teaching/learner					
2. a road sign	moving along a bumpy road	clay	reaching an aim	a group of friends	teacher/learning;
teaching/learning					
3. a guard	sowing	a sponge	drinking	a herd	teacher/classroom
4. a helping hand	suffering	clay	conquering a		
mountain	a family	teacher/classroom			
5. a dictator	bringing up				
a baby	a baby	exploring	a military field	teacher/classroom;	
teaching/learner					
6. a camel	moving slowly forward	a dromedary	Difficult		
movement	a family	teacher/teaching/learner			
learning/classroom					

7. television	making data accessible	a viewer	smoking		
cigarettes	a family	teacher/teaching/learner			
8. a jailor	punishment	an imprisoned artist	forcing food	a prison	teacher/teaching/learner/
learning/classroom					
9. a fire-fighter	pouring water	a stone			
floating on the water	swimming	frogs	teacher/teaching;		
learning/classroom					
10. a guide	setting a route	a manufacturer	a journey	-	teacher/teaching /learning
11. a guide	a sea voyage	a child	an expedition	a community	teacher/teaching /learning
12. a missionary	fighting	a child	marzipan	an extended	
family	teacher/teaching;				
learner/classroom					
13. a guide	walking in the mountains	a drifting boat	trying new dishes	a herd	teacher/teaching/learner
classroom					
14. a guide	a trip	a participant			
of the trip	sightseeing	participants of			
the trip	teacher/teaching/learner				

learning/classroom						
15. a parent	a pointless job	<i>tabula rasa</i>	practising a sport	a basket of		
various fruit	None					
16. a guide	driving a car	a long-term investment	flying a plane	a parliament	teaching/learning	
17. a guide	opening a					
present	a blank					
sheet of						
paper	carving in a rock	a pride of lions	teacher/classroom			
18. a father	acting	a child	medicine	a team	teacher/learner	
19. a shepherd	climbing a mountain	a sheep	working	a collection of individuals	teacher/learner	
20. a guardian	a mission	a conqueror	reaching an aim	a battlefield	teacher/teaching;	
learner/learning						
21. a road-sign	going upstream	a shield	going upstream	travelling	teacher/learning/ classroom	
22. a guide	painting a					
picture	a plant	walking up the				
mountain	A tree	teacher/learning				
23. a guide	moulding	clay	chiselling	A family	teaching/learner	
24. an organizer	eating dinner	a plant	cleaning	a fruit salad	teaching/learning	

Table 1. Conceptual metaphors: Set 1.

Coherence patterns distinguished for Set 1 are presented in Table 2 below. These are arranged according to the number of elements displaying consistency. Additionally, each inferential sequence is followed by the source domain(s) in which the mapping is grounded.

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teacher/teaching/learner/learning/classroom (3) (ASSISTED TRAVEL (1); MOVEMENT/PROTECTION (1); CONFLICT (1))
teacher/teaching/learner/classroom (1) (ASSISTED TRAVEL)
teacher/teaching/learner (1) (RECEPTION)
teacher/teaching/learning (2) (ASSISTED TRAVEL)
teacher/learning/classroom (1) (AUTONOMOUS TRAVEL)
teacher/classroom (3) (PROTECTION (2); CONFLICT (1))
teacher/teaching (3) (CONFLICT (2); PROTECTION (1))
teacher/learner (2) (PROTECTION/ASSISTANCE)
teacher/learning (3) (AUTONOMOUS TRAVEL (2); ASSISTED TRAVEL (1))
teaching/learner (3) (CREATION (2); PROTECTION (1))
teaching/learning (3) (AUTONOMOUS TRAVEL (2); CONFLICT (1))
learner/learning (1) (AUTONOMOUS TRAVEL)
learner/classroom (1) (MOVEMENT)
learning/classroom (1) (AUTONOMOUS TRAVEL)
no coherence (2)

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Table 2. Coherence patterns: Set 1.

The above results seem to indicate a number of tendencies. First of all, instances of full coherence are rare (10%), which may well imply that the teaching/learning process should not be described against one particular cognitive model. Instead, learners' educational experience should be translated into a multi-faceted, dynamic representation. The most prominent factor within this interactive network is the concept of movement or travelling, which features as a source do-



main of over 50% of the data collected. In other words, it seems to be the case that the subjects' pre-university level educational experience is best construed as a purposeful motion towards a particular goal, often assisted by the teacher. The concept of protection and assistance, sometimes verging on total dependence (see, for instance, examples 5 and 13 in Table 1 above), is another cognitive model within which students perceive logical interconnections (about 25%). Other domains of experience responsible for providing coherent bases are: conflict (about 20%), creation (6%) and reception (about 5%). Finally, there were no detectable logical connections in about 6% of the data.

A related issue concerns the apparently fuzzy boundaries between and among the source domains distinguished in Table 2 above. One cannot fail to notice a common entailment between travel and movement, assistance and protection, or even autonomy and conflict. Inter-relatedness of concepts is, however, only to be expected in view of the nature of cognitive categories. Since metaphors do not work in isolation and overlapping abstract systems are far from unusual, alternative classifications are expected and justified. For instance, if the aspect of leadership and assistance is conspicuous, should we talk of teachers-guides or teachers-parents? In my view, labelling the source domain is not of much importance as long as we know the essence of the metaphor. Kövecses (2002: 116) declares that the main meaning focus is encapsulated by the central mapping between the source and the target, which, in other words, is the aspect emphasized in the respondents' comments.

In view of the above, the learners' clarifications should not be underestimated since the causative links provided turn out to be an invaluable source of insight. Firstly, there are conceptual metaphors which are grounded in rich knowledge networks and, hence, need to be specified to avoid overgeneralization. For instance, in the present data the TEACHER AS A PARENT involves guidance, protection, discipline, and frustration. Interestingly, LEARNING AS SMOKING CIGARETTES (example 7, Table 1) or MARZIPAN (example 12, Table 1) highlight the ambivalent attitude people might have to those source domains. Another illustration is TEACHING AS EATING and LEARNING AS CLEANING (example 24, Table 1). Although apparently incoherent, the two source domains become consistent once we discover the main meaning focus hidden behind the metaphorical label - both involve the subject's unwillingness to perform the action. Hence, the source domains

are intertwined within the cognitive model of conflict. All in all, the comments collected allow the researcher to unearth the real meaning buried underneath a clichéd figurative tag. Consequently, new ways of thinking, hidden under fanciful linguistic expressions, can be revealed.

Another noticeable regularity is the formation of two-element inferential patterns, constituting 75% of perceived consistencies. This propensity may well indicate that certain elements of the educational model are more readily co-activated in the students' conceptual networks than others. Interestingly, the link need not be established between apparently related elements, e.g. the teacher and teaching. For instance, A TEACHER AS A GUIDE and A LEARNER AS A RECEPTACLE can be observed in examples 1, 2, 17 and 23 in Table 1 above. TEACHERS-GUIDES are also paired with feeble and dependent LEARNERS-PLANTS. Likewise, helping educators, presented as parents or guardians, are matched with learners construed as objects or materials (examples 2, 3, 4, 15 in Table 1 above).

The co-existence of various source domains may be viewed as either induced by a variety in experience or as a reflection of "common knowledge" copied by the students' from their academic environment. Whichever the case, the data collected in October 2007 demonstrates numerous inconsistencies, which may well result in a conspicuous cognitive dissonance, particularly if confronted with new educational stimuli.

**3.3.2. Set 2**

Metaphorical understandings of the teaching/learning process elicited in June 2007 are presented in Table 3 below.

TEACHER	TEACHING	LEARNER	LEARNING	CLASSROOM	TYPE OF COHERENCE
1. a jug	talking	an inferior	playing	a prison	learner/classroom
2. a deer	cooking	a leaf	drinking	an orchard	learner/classroom
3. a parent	leading an expedition	a baby	growing up	a family	teacher/learner /learning/
classroom					
4. a parent	feeding data				
into a					
computer	a baby	rolling a stone	a bunch of grapes	teacher/learner	
5. a corporal	leading a				
dog	-	being on a diet	a cage	None	
6. a parent	Sisyphian				
labour	a farmer	a lottery	a society	learner/learning	

7. a foster						
parent	art	Clay	Chemical			
Reactions	a beehive	teaching/learner				
8. a boss	managing	a worker	creating	a society	teacher/teaching/learner	
9. a parent	a routine	a blind				
person	eating	a cage	none			
10 a shepherd	A journey into the					
unknown	a baby	excavations	a society	teacher/learner		
11. a hunter	-	a sponge	climbing	a flock of birds	none	
12. a guide	Endless					
travelling	a bucket	discovering	a crowd	teacher/teaching/learning		
13 a politician	fighting	a subject	watching a movie	a society	teacher/teaching/learner/	
classroom						
14 a road-sign	learning	-	a journey	a herd	teacher/learning	

15. a human being learner/classroom	fighting	a patient	fighting	a hospital	teaching/learning
16. a book	forcing	a donkey	digging	a cage	none
17. a superior slate	fighting	a blank	teacher/teaching		
18. a god	memorizing	a prison			
roller-coaster	going on a	building	a prison	none	
19 an invader	a sponge	a sponge	climbing	a cage	teacher/teaching
20. a source	struggling	a sponge	digesting	a container	none
21. an actor	guiding				
stories	Telling	a trip	a box	teacher/teaching	
	an anatomist				

Table 3. Conceptual metaphors: Set 2.

Coherence patterns for the second set are presented below:

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teacher/teaching/learner/classroom (1) (CONFLICT)
teacher/learner/learning/classroom (1) (PROTECTION/ASSISTANCE)
teacher/teaching/learner (1) (DEPENDENCE)
teacher/teaching/learning (1) (AUTONOMOUS TRAVEL)
teacher/teaching (3) (CONFLICT (2); AUTONOMOUS TRAVEL (1))
teacher/learner (2) (PROTECTION/ASSISTANCE)
teaching/learner (1) (CREATION)
teaching/learning (1) (CONFLICT)
learner/learning (1) (DEPENDENCE)
learner/classroom (3) (DEPENDENCE)
no coherence (6)

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Table 4. Coherence patterns: Set 2.

The dominant propensity emerging from Table 4 above is the absence of coherence relations in as much as 30% of the data. Moreover, no cases of full consistency have been observed. The prevailing source domain is that of dependence/assistance (over 40%), followed by conflict (about 25%). Minor correspondences involve the notions of autonomous travel and creation. Moreover, as already indicated above, concepts are often vaguely delineated, as illustrated by diminishing autonomy detectable in the assistance/protection/dependence chain.

An interesting regularity concerns the novelty of the linguistic expressions provided by the respondents. Although the concepts targeted by these formulations are predominantly conventionalised mappings, e.g. THE TEACHER IS A SUPERIOR (examples 5, 8, 17, 18, 19 in Table 3 above) or THE LEARNER IS A DEPENDANT (examples 2 and 16), they are often originally phrased. For instance, teachers are viewed as deer and students can be referred to as leaves or donkeys. However, new ways of thinking can also be detected, as instantiated by the TEACHER IS A HUMAN BEING metaphor in example 15 (Table 3 above).

Finally, cognitive commotion may be evidenced by a number of occurrences. Firstly, new aspects of conventional concepts are frequently highlighted in the respondents' comments. For instance, in example 2, likening educators to deer entails their distant and aloof manner. TEACHERS AS HUNTERS shoot at learners' ignorance. LEARNERS-FARMERS are uncertain of the results of their labour. Similarly, LEARNING AS A LOTTERY (example 6) or A CHEMICAL REACTION (example 7) utilizes the insecurity factor. These original formulations may well indicate that new experience has resulted in a considerable cognitive discomfort, which, if reinforced, may lead to the dissemination of novel conceptions and their systematic groupings. Moreover, traditional concepts are given new interpretations. For instance, LEARNING AS DRINKING in example 2, Table 3 involves lack of saturation whereas the same source domain in Table 1 entails ambivalence. Likewise, TEACHERS-PARENTS in Set 2 are seen as punishing and demanding while the same correspondence in Set 1 highlights care, assistance and protection. Finally, cognitive turmoil is evidenced by an observable partial absence of similes (examples 5, 11, 14 in Table 3).

In view of the above and pertaining to the students' comments, a substantial number of the matches provided seem to tap to the incompleteness and ambiguity of conceptual metaphors. As Elliot (1984: 32) rightly observes, EDUCATION AS PREPARATION can be taken as preparation for life, work, war, or even prayer. Consequently, EDUCATION AS GUIDANCE may be interpreted as leading the learner across pre-set paths or taking them outside the boundaries of determined canons. A particular construal will thus be closely linked to the education paradigm forming the foundations of a given instructional milieu.

#### 4. Conclusion

Learners' personal theories appear to constitute a promising area of research into conceptual metaphors and coherence relations obtaining across cognitive models. First of all, students' narratives seem to reflect cognitive dynamics encapsulated by unpredictable and varied inferences holding among constructs apparently belonging to the same cognitive model. In comparison with teachers' metaphorical models of education (see pp. 3-4 above), the results of the present study are far less uniform. Learners' models of education do not establish correspondences between TEACHERS-GUIDES and LEARNERS-TRAVELLERS. The LEARNER AS A

CONTAINER does not mean that LEARNING IS FILLING.

Another feature of learners' educational discourse is its susceptibility to new experience. While teachers seem to build their metaphors primarily around certain cultural constructs (see), learners far more readily react to the impact of new stimuli (Tables 3 and 4 above). Consequently, their linguistic metaphors become more creative and conceptual blueprints are modified to encompass emerging meanings. Thus, the "common sense" notions which everybody has about language and language learning, and which are frequently transmitted from teachers' jargon to students' talk are gradually giving way to modified, internalized and perpetuated concepts.

Still, what remains to be verified is the permanence of the influence which new instructive contexts may have on the learners' concepts of education. In other words, avenues of further research should lead into establishing what metaphorical concepts the students described in the present study will live and learn by in the future.

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