



*Analyzing University Students'
Recognition of Suffering as a
Metaphor in "Hamlet"*

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ABSTRACT

Metaphor is one of the informative components and represented as recognition of the abstract thing by the concrete thing. So, the domain of suffering as a metaphor is the subject of this research paper. Metaphor has an outstanding role in developing the understanding of our emotions, specially the emotions of pain and suffering. Suffering is presented as a painful experience and it is completely personal that other people do not feel other's pain and suffering.

The main aim of this paper is to analyze English foreign language students' recognition of suffering as metaphor in *Hamlet*. This study examines the hypothesis that the students of English as foreign language are able to recognize metaphor, while their level in recognizing suffering

as a metaphor is below average. The study is limited to the students of third stage in English department at University of Samarra during the academic year 2017-2018.

An achievement test has been constructed and its validity is obtained by presenting it to the jury members, and its reliability has been ascertained by using test and re-test method to find out the correct and incorrect answers then finding the percentage of these answers.

The statistical analysis of data has shown that third stage students in English Department (College of Education at University of Samarra) are unable to recognize suffering as metaphor in *Hamlet*; therefore, the first hypothesis has been refused.



Section one

1.1 The Problem

Metaphor is one of the main language devices that is used to increase the persuasive power of language whether in genre or everyday life. It plays a very important role in a wide range of human activities. It refers to the use of language and images, and it is used as attention-grabbing devices (Semino, 2008: 168-169).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980:3) say that metaphor is the figure of speech that can be understood as a basic conceptual process of understanding one idea by using a word or a phrase that is devoted to the different one. It is typically viewed as a characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than a thought or an action.

Metaphor is relevant to the construction of suffering, so suffering like any other phenomenon, can be modeled metaphorically.

Suffering is an individual and personal state which is associated with physical discomfort, pain, fear, isolation shame and with feeling of anxiety. However, sufferers and experts need to interact in the process of treatment and metaphor may be used more or less successfully within these interactions. Semino (2008:175) supports this idea saying that metaphor often plays an important role in the presentation of suffering in many different situations and conditions. It belongs to the kind of complex, subjunctive and poorly delineated experiences that tend to be verbalized and conceptualized conventionally through metaphor.

Metaphor enables sufferers to express and share their experiences in order to clarify various aspects of suffering.



Students of English foreign language (EFL) study this device in literature, instructors point out this device, but for the best knowledge for the researcher, they don't tackle it in details to make students recognize the concept behind metaphor especially metaphor as suffering students' ability to recognize suffering as a metaphor has not been investigated before. So, there is a need for this study to shed light on these notions behind metaphors, especially suffering as metaphor and to find out whether students of EFL at University of Samarra/ College of Education/ English Department are able to recognize one type of metaphor from other types.

This study sheds light on a matter that has not been investigated before which broadens students' concepts of metaphor as suffering. This study is expected to present valuable information for learners of EFL professors, researchers, textbooks, writers and genius people who write plays.

The study shows some concepts that are familiar linked to things which are not familiar, for example, suffering is difficult to be expressed in terms of other words that can fully be understood.

1.2 The Aim of Study

This study aims at:

- 1- Investigating English foreign language students' recognition of suffering as a metaphor in "Hamlet".
- 2- Finding our students' level in recognizing metaphorical meanings for suffering to examine students' ability to recognize the domain that people sense pain and suffering from other types of metaphors.



1.3 The Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that:

- 1- Students of English as a foreign language are able to recognize suffering as a metaphor.
- 2- English foreign language students' level of recognizing suffering as metaphor from other types of metaphor is below average.

1.4 The Limit of the Study

- 1- Focusing on the language of pain by using such metaphors, since it is difficult to see or feel the suffering of others.
- 2- The students of Third stage in English Department/ University of Samarra during the academic year 2017-2018.
- 3- One literary work "Hamlet" written by William Shakespeare.

1.5 Definitions of Basic Terms

- 1- Metaphor is the most important and widespread figure of speech that one idea is devoted to another by using a word or expression (Baldick, 2001:153).

Operational Definition:

Metaphor is any work or expression used by writers of the literary work under study to express suffering, pain, distress or discomfort.

- 2- Suffering: is the state of being under pressure, feeling pain and it is presented as an healthy experience is completely personal (Boyd,2013: 9).



Operational Definition:

Suffering: is the expressions mentioned in "Hamlet" that belong to the domain of suffering.

3- Recognition: is the process of checking whether a sentence contains a metaphorical expression, then identifying the source and target concept of metaphor (Lee, 2013: 379).

Operational Definition:

Recognition: is the students' ability to identify suffering as metaphor in "Hamlet".



Section Two

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 The Notion of Metaphor

The word "metaphor" is defined as a poetic linguistic expression that one or more words are used outside their conventional meaning to express a similar meaning (Lakoff, 1992: 4).

Baldick (2001: 153) mentions that metaphor is the most important and widespread figure of speech that one idea is devoted to another one by using a word or expression.

Ortong (1979:3) explains that the word metaphor comes from the "Greek metapherein". The etymology of this Greek term stems from two parts: 'meta' meaning implying "a change" and "pherein" meaning "to carry or to bear"

Metaphor may create realities for people especially social realities that will lead to reinforcing the power of the metaphor for making clear experience (Lakoff, 1992: 159).

2.2 The Importance of Metaphor

Metaphor is the basic phenomenon that occurs in the whole range of language activity. It is pervasive in language and there are some principles that refer to its importance, metaphor is a basis process in the formation of words and word meanings; concepts and meanings are expressed in words through metaphor. It is very important because of its function; in the sense that it is used basically for describing, explaining, clarifying, expressing, evaluating and entertaining our speech or writing. Metaphor is chosen so as to communicate with others about what we think or how we feel, about something to explain the



particular thing, to convey a meaning in an interesting or creative way, or to do all these (Wright, 2002: 9).

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980:14) metaphor is a powerful instrument and by using metaphors we can organize, express our experience and create the important realities in life. So, they focus on five types of metaphors, they are structural metaphor, orientational metaphor, ontological metaphor, container metaphor and imaginative metaphor.

2.3 Metaphor and Suffering

Understanding the metaphor of suffering is based on mental disturbance with physical troubles. Stibbe (1996: 156) states that some studies acknowledge the metaphor of suffering is an essential topic to deal with our thoughts. He focuses on the idea that the effect of suffering as metaphor depends on the situation and individual concerned.

The metaphorical construction damages the person's perception of himself/herself. The person's perception, the perception of society, and behaviour toward people diagnosed with burdened afflictions (Digiacomio, 1992:117)

Sontag's attempt to remove the viscera meaning from all kinds of suffering as embodying a particular stance (Levin, 1987:71). Brandt (1988:18) states that is more appropriate to use the metaphor of suffering to analyze the process by which suffering is given meaning. One can recognize the ways that social and cultural values shape the disease that means one will be able to deal humanely and affectively with a problem as serious and complex as cancer, sadness, pain or disappointment.

Romanyshyn (1982:125) acknowledges the ontological dimension of metaphor is to see that metaphor as an embodied perspective and meaningful

subjectively giving the concrete expression to metaphor. These metaphors of body reflect the way in which they came to constitute their world. He believes the feelings to be a punishment from God. These social relations have important implications.

Van den Berg (1972:71) focuses that relationship between man and the other is a metaphor of the nearness and distance of world and body.

Metaphor plays a pervasive role in genre and a highly sensitive discourse specifically the discourse of suffering, it is used by participants to talk about different aspects of the disease. Its importance lays in the differences between the metaphors that used by sufferers and non sufferers (Semino, 2008: 190).

Metaphor connects two conceptual domains the target domain and source domain. Semino (2008: 230) defines that source domain as the conceptual domain which is used to think and talk metaphorically about another conceptual domain, while the target domain is presented as the conceptual domain that talked about another conceptual domain. The mental representation can function as target in conceptual metaphors. The choice of source domain is linked to the activities of the speaker himself, who is well-known for his success. Triggered metaphor has a clear function as a rhetorical tool to convey the political issues (Semino and Masci, 1996: 268).

Topic- triggered metaphor is defined as a metaphor where the source domain is closely related to the topic of the text (Semino, 2008:230). Kovecses (2010:15) defines the source domain as the conceptual domain that the metaphorical expression has been drawn to understand another conceptual domain. It is concrete and based on sensual experience. Target domain is presented as the conceptual domain as example, life is a journey. Life is a target domain while journey is a source domain.



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The choice of metaphorical source domain may be influenced by the aspects of the communicative situation as a result of what is called "pressure of coherence". Topic-triggered metaphors involve the using of certain topics under discussion as source domain. Using of topic-triggered metaphors will increase the rhetorical force of the text for audiences. This type of metaphors rely on pre-existing non-metaphorical and highly evaluative associations between source and target domains (Semino, 2008: 222-223).

2.4 The Analysis of Metaphor in "Hamlet"

Shakespeare's great work "Hamlet" is full of melancholy, grief, madness and suffering. Hamlet provides his own self-torture and is the victim of sadness and grief. Ophelia suffers at her lover's discretion because of decisions influenced by her weak social position. Hamlet and Ophelia share a common connection: the loss of a parental figure. Hamlet loses his father as a result of a horrible murder, as does Ophelia, but her situation looks worse than her lover's because her lover kills her father and all of her hopes for her future. This bad situation causes her sadness, suffering and grief that quickly makes her turn to irretrievable madness (Selwyn and Blount, 1922: 87).

According to (Toshack, 2003:189) Hamlet's soliloquy of "To be or not to be" in Act III, scene 1 is full of metaphors that bring the various themes of the play together. It shows a great deal of suffering. One of these is Hamlet's uncertainty of action and inability to decide how to cope with the problems he faces. In this soliloquy, Hamlet discusses metaphorically his indecisiveness about the importance of continuing his life and asks himself whether it is worth facing all his problems (slings and arrows of outrageous fortune) or to commit suicide (and by opposing them, end them). Hamlet metaphorically compares the problems of his life (slings and arrows" and a "sea of troubles"). Hamlet reveals



metaphorically in this soliloquy his depression and belief that his entire life is full of suffering and hardships.

Hamlet refers to death as "the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns. He refers to death as an unknown and horrible thing. Hamlet argues that it is better to bear the difficulties of life to which he is accustomed to the uncertainty of death which could be worse. The metaphor of death as sleep or as an unknown country helps the audience to see the world in the same way as Hamlet does (ibid: 120).

Table (1) represents some of expressions that are used in "Hamlet" and these expressions refer to suffering, so expressions of suffering are presented as metaphor. This play consists of five acts. The first act has five scenes while the second act has two scenes. The third act has four scenes, the fourth act has seven scenes and the fifth act has two scenes.



Table (1)

The Analysis of Metaphor in "Hamlet"

The Expression	Number of Act	Number of Scene	Domain
Slings and arrows	٣	١	Problems and troubles
Too much of water hast thou poor Ophelia	٤	٧	Sorrow
To sleep, Perchance to dream	٣	١	death
God has given you one face	٣	١	deceit
in my heart there was a kind of fighting	٥	٢	pain
The rest, is silence	٥	٢	death
The devil has power to assume a pleasing shape	٢	٢	beauty
if it be now, it is not to come	5	2	sadness
But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue	1	٢	misery
And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust	2	٢	melancholy
To be or not to be	3	٢	life and death

3. The Procedures

The practical side of this study includes choosing the sample of this study. According to (Ary et.al., 1972: 125) sample is the process of selecting a group of individuals who represent the larger group that are selected for the study.

The sample of this study is 50 students in the third stage of the English Department/ College of Education/ University of Samarra.

An Achievement test has been constructed to find out students' recognition of metaphor as suffering. The first step of constructing the achievement test is through the analysis of behavioural objectives. Table (2) shows that.

Table (2)
Specification of Behavioural Objectives of the Test

Question Number	Contents	Behaviours	Scores
1	Recognize suffering as metaphor in (Hamlet)	To identify the metaphor of suffering in (Hamlet)	25
2	Match the given expression with the explanation that refers to	To recognize the suitable explanation of the metaphor	25
Total			50

The test consists of two questions: Question 1 has items testing the students' recognition of suffering as metaphor in "Hamlet". Question 2 consists of 5 items testing students' recognition of suffering as metaphor by matching given expressions with the suitable explanation that refers to Five scores are allotted to each correct item while an incorrect item takes zero. The total mark of the test is 50.

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The reliability and validity of the test have been ascertained. The test and re-test method has been used to estimate the reliability of the test, then T-test has been used. It has been found 0.87. This means that the test is reliable. The difficulty level of the items and the discrimination power have also been found, see table (3). The final version of the test has been applied and scores have been processed statistically.

Table (3)

Difficulty Level and Discrimination Power of the Test

Number of Items	Difficulty Level	Discrimination Power	High Group	Lower Group
1	0.48	0.44	95	35
2	0.46	0.55	100	25
3	0.41	0.52	90	20
4	0.50	0.55	105	30
5	0.61	0.48	115	50
6	0.31	0.44	120	15
7	0.41	0.52	90	20
8	0.52	0.44	100	40
9	0.43	0.41	85	30
10	0.41	0.52	90	20

4.1 Analysis of Data

The test measures the students' ability to recognize suffering as a metaphor in "Hamlet" that the students have studied in the third stage at the University of Samarra, College of Education, English Department. Students' mean scores and standard deviation have been obtained at the recognition level. The mean score of the test is 16.0690 and the standard deviation is 6.18715. T-test formula* for one sample has been applied, the computed t-value is 7.773,

whereas the tabulated one is 2.04 at 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there is no significant difference. The theoretical mean is 25 and the degree of freedom is 49 and the calculated mean is 16.0690. this means that the standard below the average as shown in Table (4).

Table (4)

Students' Mean, Standard Deviation , "T" Values

Mean	Std. Deviation	Theoretical Mean	T-Value		Freedom Degree	Level of Significance
			Comp.	Tabu.		
16.0690	6.18715	٢٥	7.773	2.04	٤٩	0.05

4.2 Discussion of the Results

The measurement of Third year, students' level/ English Department/ College of Education/ University of Samarra in recognizing suffering as a metaphor in "Hamlet" is the main reason for designing the test in this study. T-test formula for one sample is used to find out the

$$* T = \frac{X - A}{S / \sqrt{N}}$$

Where: T= accounted Value

S= Standard Deviation

X= Mean Scores

A= Theoretical Mean

N= Number of the Students

(Heysleet, 1979.114)

level of students' which shows that the level of Samarra students is below average. This means that students of Third year/ College of Education/ English



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Department in University of Samarra do not have a good idea about suffering metaphor and their level is not good and it is not promising.

Since the computed T-Value is 7.773 whereas the tabulated T-Value is 2.04, their recognition of the domain of metaphor is not good and below the average.

So, the statistical analysis of the results has shown that third year students at University of Samarra are unable to recognize the domain of suffering as a metaphor, though they have studied metaphor in literature, but they study it in general. They do not know that metaphors are related to scientific, medical, psychological or social texts. This is due to the fact that instructors teach the theme and general meaning neglecting the metaphorical side of the play. Besides no literary analysis of language devices is applied by instructors or students. Moreover, metaphor is difficult to be recognized and it needs cognitive processes.



5.1 Conclusions

The conclusions of this study are:

- 1- Third stage students in the English Department at University of Samarra could not recognize suffering as a metaphor in "Hamlet", because the computed "t"-test value is greater than the tabulated "t"- test value. Their calculated mean score is 16.0690 whereas their theoretical mean is 25. Recognizing suffering as metaphor is not promising.
- 2- According to the students' responses, they are not very successful in recognizing suffering as metaphor since they have studied metaphor in its literary sense.
- 3- Students cannot recognize that metaphors are found in everyday life that serve the foreign language students, e.g., T.V, programmes, courses, and so on.

5.2 Recommendations

Depending on the results of this study, it is recommended:

- 1- In the early stages, the students should acquire certain knowledge to enrich their competences to be able to recognize metaphor, in general, and suffering as metaphor in specific.
- 2- Syllabus designers should pay attention to increase texts which deal with metaphors and their types that help the students to recognize metaphor correctly.
- 3- Teachers should pay attention to present the expressions that contain metaphors, by paying attention to everyday life metaphors on T.V. programs advertisements, and etc. This way the students will have more information and practical exercises.
- 4- Students' attention should be directed to the scientific and medical texts which contain suffering as metaphor.



5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

These are among the suggestions for further studies:

- 1- Conducting a similar study to investigate the students' ability to produce metaphor in all its types.
- 2- conducting a research to find out Iraqi students understanding of metaphor at the university level, in scientific and medical texts.
- 3- A study could be conducted to evaluate the instructors' competencies in explaining metaphor in drama specifically.
- 4- An empirical study should be conducted to find out the effect of using discourse analysis method in learning suffering as metaphor on students' performance.



APPENDIX

The Test

University of Samarra

College of Education

Third –Year Test

Q1/ Recognize suffering as a metaphor in " Hamlet " and mention whether it refers to the pain ,love, beauty , guilt , sadness , deceit , death or honesty.

(25 Marks)

1-There are more things in Heaven and Earth, thou are dreamt of in your philosophy.

2-God hath given you one face ,and you make yourself another.

3-To die, to sleep -,perchance to dream-ay ,there's the rub, for in this sleep of death what dream may come.

4-So full of artless jealousy is guilt , it pills itself in fearing to be split.

5-Doubt thou the stars are fire

Doubt thou the sun doth move

Doubt truth to be a liar

But never doubt I love

Q2/Match the following sentences taken from "Hamlet" with the explanation that refers to : (25 Marks)

The Sentences:

1-I must be cruel only to be kind; thus bad begins , and worse remains behind.

2-The rest ,is silence .

3-Now , if it be not now , yet it will come :the readiness is all.

4-Sir , in my heart there was a kind of fighting. That would not let me sleep.

5-The Devil hath power .To assume a pleasing shape.

The Explanation:

a-death b- pain c- cruelty and kindness d-beauty e-sadness



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