



---

## The Impact of Using Figurative Speech (Metaphor & Metonymy) through Dialogic Interaction on EFL Learners' Writing Performance

---

Nasrin Jenabagha<sup>1</sup>, Ali Najafi<sup>2\*</sup>, Amir Marzban<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PhD student, English language teaching department, Islamic Azad University, Qaemshahr branch

<sup>2\*</sup>Assistant Professor, English language teaching department, Islamic Azad University, Qaemshahr branch

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor, English language teaching department, Islamic Azad University, Qaemshahr branch

---

Received: 21 February, 2021

Accepted: 20 June, 2021

---

### Abstract

Regarding the significance of writing in today's English learning and figurative language, the present paper seeks to determine whether using metaphoric language can have any positive effects on writing improvement through dialogic interactions. A total of 60 female students at intermediate proficiency level from a university in Gorgan, Iran, were selected through convenience sampling. The participants were divided into three groups each one consisting of 20 learners. Quick Oxford Placement Test and Writing Test developed by the current study authors were used to collect data. First, the data normality of K-S test was run. Second, an ANOVA was run to see whether there would be any difference between the three groups in terms of their writing improvement in the pre-test. Then the same ANOVA was run between the post-tests of these three groups. This study showed that metaphor and metonymy through dialogic interactions had significant effects on the participations' writing. All in all, as pedagogical implications, the present research addresses EFL teachers to practice more dialogical interactions and calls for using group work and figurative language in writing training programs which have not been employed in foreign language courses.

**Keywords:** Dialogic Interaction; Figurative Language; Metaphor; Metonymy; Writing

---

\*2 Corresponding Author's email:  
s.najafi.k@qaemiau.ac.ir



## INTRODUCTION

Writing as one of the essential skills in teaching English as a foreign language reveals the authority of learners in expressing what exists in their minds. Thus learners must pay attention to writing as a process and as a product too. Besides, learning writing contains writing skills, rules and conventions, the so-called strategic writing instruction. Consequently, learners should not merely recognize these strategies but distinguish how to manage and control them as well. The foremost aim of strategic writing instruction is that learning to write contains the learning of conceptual processes to create writing and manage writing production (Calhoun & Hale, 2003). Investigation shows that influential or expert writers are strategic. In other words, writers have object for their writing and modify their writing based on each object and for each writing task. For example, to compose paragraphs, strategic writers apply a variety of strategies and skills (Buhrke, Henkels, Klene, & fister, 2002). A strategy is a plan chosen deliberately by the writer to achieve a specific end or to complete an assumed task (El-Koumy, 1991). The objective of all writing instruction is to aid learners to become expert writers to reach independence and autonomy in their writing. Learning to apply writing strategies successfully is necessary for making meaning in students' writing and as a test to adjust learners' passive outlooks towards writing into a positive one.

One of the strategies that can help complete a practical writing task is using figurative

language. Those who have taken a literature course have become familiar with the term metaphor as defining a 'concept described by another concept'. When Shakespeare's Romeo, for example, says that "Juliet is the sun" recognises that her character is positive and shiny. This metaphor, indicates that, for Romeo, she is as vital as the sun, without which, as we all know, there is no life. Removing the metaphor, Romeo could have said, "Juliet is my life". Metaphor analysis has traditionally been used in the study of literature, especially poetry. More recently, it has been used in second language acquisition. As Lakoff and Turner (1989) have explained, the nature of a metaphor evolves when it becomes an 'unconscious and automatic' alternative to the word it replaces.

Regarding what has been explained above on the significance and importance of writing in today's English learning as a foreign language, various issues and variables have been presented. However, given all these different facets of writing, the present study aims to explore a concept that has rarely been approached in the related literature using figurative language and its effect on writing. Two types of figurative language, metaphor and metonymy, have been studied in this research. Metaphor has been the concern of the arts and humanities for a long time. And it is also deep-rooted in philosophical concern which dates back to Aristotle who describes metaphor as examples of novel poetic language and is attractive and ornamental naturally (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Customarily metaphor analysis has been applied in the study of literature,

particularly poetry. But lately, it appears to be of interest to researchers of different societies and circumstances containing educational studies. Study using metaphor as an instrument in language research and thought began after publishing “Metaphors We Live By” by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). It mainly was applied to find educators or students opinions about the educational process. It has been generally used in second language learning and the application of metaphor in training foreign languages can help the research on teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

Concerning explanations above on metaphor, it can be theoretically related to writing and it is expected to have some effects on writing theoretically. Thus, the present study seeks to explore this issue to come into illuminating findings. However, this connection should be possible through some techniques and activities. Another key feature of the present study is to explore the effect of dialogic interaction in fostering student writing. Dialogic interaction is supposed to contribute to effective writing since it can provide learners with lots of opportunities to benefit others’ ideas and words. Dialogic interaction is based on five rules planned to ensure that interaction is dialogic instead of transmissive, which is normally found in many classrooms today. These rules of dialogic teaching need pedagogy to be: (a) collective in that teachers and students work together to address learning tasks; (b) reciprocal so that teachers and students attend to each other, share ideas, and consider alternative perspectives; (c) supportive where students assist each other’s learning; (d)

cumulative in that teachers and students build on each other’s ideas to construct coherent investigations; and (e) purposeful with teachers ensuring that discussions are designed to achieve specific educational goals (Alexander, 2008). In the dialogic classroom, Alexander (2008) adds, instructors use more high-level questions that explore instructors’ thinking and motivate them to analyze and examine on thoughts, student-teacher exchanges are longer with learners drawing on the opinions of others or challenging various propositions with evidence, instructors provide learners with more thinking time to answer to questions, and teachers questions are more narrowed and genuinely open with less emphasis on questions that cue for specific responses. In addition, Alexander (2008) clarifies that learners attend more to what other instructors have to say and talk more purposefully towards solving problems, as there is more student-to-student communication. There is greater participation of less-able children in class discussions. Besides, this emphasis on dialogue has caused reading and writing results for all students, including the weaker ones. As a result, it may be useful to use dialogic interaction to improve learners’ writing. The present study considered this issue and attempted to test it empirically. All in all, the present paper seeks to find out whether using metaphoric language can have any positive effects on writing improvement through dialogic interactions. In other words, the present study tries to answer this research question: Does using figurative language (metaphor and metonymy) have any significant

effects on improving writing through dialogic interactions among Iranian EFL learners?

### **Writing**

Writing is measured to be a challenging skill to develop and a complex activity to do. That is because there are lots of activities that have to be completed simultaneously. While expressing notions, learners must be careful about the suitable vocabulary, the spelling of the words, the mechanics, the style, and the accurate structure to be used in organizing good English sentences. The difficulty of writing skill makes learners' writing performance unacceptable. There may be numerous issues accountable for the students' low ability in essay writing performance, among them are the method used by the lecturer in essay writing instruction, the resources discussed in the classroom, the difficulty of writing skill itself, the strategy used by the learners in essay writing, etc. Some studies indicate that it is affected by many influences, among them are: (1) the complexity of the language itself, which comprises vocabulary, organization of ideas, grammar, spelling, referencing; (2) environment which contains few opportunities to practice English and culture; and (3) methods of teaching English which contains the strategies of instruction, using L1 or L2 in English classes, teachers' low proficiency in English, and lack of writing practice in educational institutions (Hyland, 2003).

The necessity of foreign language writing became progressively obvious because of the international growth of English as the

dialect of academic and professional communication, (Matsuda, 2003). Foreign language writing has come to assume a much more central position than it occupied twenty or thirty years ago and writing has become one of the essential skills in a world that is more than ever driven by text and numerical (Hyland, 2003). It is very significant to make L2 learners with decent writing skills to aid them interconnect their thoughts and information proficiently over the worldwide technology network. Teaching and learning writing generally varies from speaking, it requires a widespread and devoted preparation. There are numerous elements that have a great effect on learning and teaching L2 writing tasks, as in for instance, former skills, the setting of L1 writing proficiency, teaching and learning practices, and etc. Grab and Kaplan (1996, p. 29) approve "research on L2 writing in contexts other than the USA, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom (UK) in minimal". Study on L2 writing has to universally increase and have autonomous L2 writing theories, coping with the L2 writer, not L1. Nowadays, there is a thoughtful plea in novel theoretical methods into the training of written texts and tactics of teaching L2 writing to incorporate current theory and study outcomes (Hyland, 2003).

In this vein, several previous studies dealt with problems related to developing writing skills in L2. For example, Muhammed (2015) concentrated on the difficulties of paragraph writing among college students. He theorized that Kurdish EFL students encounter considerable difficulties in writing paragraphs, such as paragraph components and mixing

several ideas in one paragraph. Likewise, as predicted, both have been revealed as two foremost challenges with some others like worthlessness of controlling ideas and support, redundancy and repetition and a lack of description.

Sharadgah (2013) investigated the influence of an Internet-based instructional program (IBIP) on developing EFL students' writing performance. The participants in this study were 98 male students registered in a writing course in the first semester of 2012/2013. This research employed a quasi-experimental design. The subjects were accidentally divided into two groups: an experimental group was trained writing via the IBIP; and the control group was trained in the conventional method. To attain the purpose of the research the investigator considered an Internet-based instructional program. In addition, the website of the program was provided with beneficial associations and learning materials. The research results showed that EFL learners in the experimental group who employed the IBIP revealed much development in their writing performance than the EFL learners in the control group who employed the conventional method.

Ting and Qian (2010) examined peer feedback given to 11 students in a Chinese EFL writing classroom. The study's goals were to comprehend how much peer feedback was united into revisions, what types of revisions were made, and whether the revisions can cause development in the learners' compositions. Text analyses of all the 11 students' first and second drafts were carried out by assessing

accuracy, fluency, grammatical complexity, and vocabulary complexity. The results indicated that the learners incorporated a considerable part of the peer feedback in their revisions, most of which were surface-level revisions. The revised drafts were to some extent enhanced concerning fluency but significantly enhanced in terms of accuracy. No significant differences were observed concerning grammatical and lexical complexity. The outcomes showed that peer-review activities might encourage self-correction among learners and support independent critical readers and writers.

### **Metaphor**

Botha (2009) described metaphor as viewing, demarcating or inferring some unacquainted educational phenomenon, event or action regarding a familiar thing, event or action. To be clearer, using metaphor conveys one idea or theoretical domain, in the sense of another. In this study, metaphor refers to using some metaphoric expressions taught by the teacher in the experimental groups and producing some more metaphoric expressions from their own knowledge and use it in their writing. Here some related studies on metaphor are reported.

Oxford, Tomlinson, Barcelos, Harrington, Roberta, Saleh, and Longhini, (1998) studied teachers' metaphors in L2 teaching and demanded four major philosophical perspectives with consistent archetypal metaphorical teacher roles (molding, gate keeping, gardening, and democratizing). Cortazzi and Jin (1999) recognized several



conceptual metaphors for teaching, language, and learning (for example, “teaching is a journey,” “language is nature,” and “learning is light”) in their cross-cultural study among language teachers and students. Ellis (1998) discovered seven basic metaphors for “learner” in the SLA literature (container, machine, negotiator, problem solver, builder, fighter, and investor) and five metaphorical structures by L2 learners themselves (sufferer, problem solver, traveler, fighter, and worker). Bullough (1991) utilized metaphors to find pre-service students’ notions of teaching and recommended that metaphor can be a powerful means by which students and educators comprehend and express their learning and teaching experiences. Sakui and Gaies (2003) informed on a self-study by a Japanese EFL teacher and her opinions about writing and teaching writing by analysis of the metaphors assumed by the teacher in diary entries and interviews. The outcomes of their study showed that the prominence of teachers’ opinions on action and the important association between beliefs, identities and changes in metaphors might be an indication of variations in notions of teaching. Kramsch (2003) similarly used metaphor approach to examine opinions about learning foreign languages. Kramsch (2003) evaluated college students’ explicit metaphors for language learning and students’ essays. She claimed that students and teachers make illustrations of themselves and their skills through metaphors.

Shokouhi and Isazadeh (2009) tried to offer an operative method for the Iranian language learners to learn and use conceptual and image

metaphors. They revealed that: “...different factors can be influential for the comprehension of metaphors. Improving the vocabulary and grammatical realization of the target language, emphasis on the production phases, and the use of real contexts in which the meaning of the expressions can be easily obtained while the culture of the target language becomes clarified can help enhance metaphorical comprehension. Cultural awareness offers a great deal to the development of communicative competence and other language skills.” (p. 26).

Farjami (2012) tried to discover images and metaphors English students suggest for vocabulary learning. First, 350 learners in seven cities in Iran with significant knowledge of English learning were questioned to compare vocabulary learning to concrete objects and activities. Their 130 analogies were reviewed and analyzed multiple times to recognize fitting labels and allocate inclusive categories. The five most common themes which occurred from the analysis were FOOD & DRINK, COLLECTING, JOURNEY, PUZZLE/PROBLEM, and MUSIC. Grounded on examining the metaphorical themes and the images that create them, several noticeable practical and theoretical points with implications for teaching language and vocabulary were tentatively argued. They determined that “different learners may have different process images and it certainly matters whether or not those images are attuned to how people learn; but, probably, even more, important than the correspondence of learners’ comparisons to brain mechanisms is that process images might help learners make

personal sense of their effort and help them see a rationale for it.” (p. 88).

### **Metonymy**

Metonymy is a kind of figurative language that has not been examined with regard to cross-linguistic differences and language learning. It is a cognitive linguistic process in which one entity is considered to mention another, related, entity (Kövecses, 2003). For instance, the word ‘Hoover’ can be used to mean vacuum cleaner, by the use of a PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT relationship, or we can say that we ‘need a drink’, to refer precisely to alcoholic drink, which would suggest a WHOLE FOR PART metonymic relationship. We may say that we want ‘some muscle’, when what we want is a sturdy one to aid us move some equipment, therefore suggesting a DEFINING PROPERTY FOR CATEGORY metonymic relationship, and so on. Metonymic meanings might be indirect and simply lost by language learners, whose languages will not essentially hold the same metonymic references as those used by the target language. In the present study, metonymy refers to using metonymic expressions taught by the teacher in the experimental groups and producing some new metonymy by the learners. Here are some studies on metonymy.

Guan (2009) examined the cognitive nature of metonymy and its suggestions for English vocabulary teaching. This investigation showed the cognitive nature of metonymy with regard to its definition, classification and contiguity notion firstly. According to this, the writer then

surveyed the meaning extension and lexical conversion of vocabulary from the viewpoint of metonymy, and determines that comprehending the cognitive nature of metonymy can significantly encourage the effectiveness of vocabulary teaching and aid to develop learners’ vocabulary amount.

Littlemore, Arizono and May (2016) defined a two-part study discovering metonymy comprehension by Japanese learners of English. In the first part of the study, ten Japanese learners of English were requested to describe the meanings of twenty expressions instantiating a variety of metonymy types. Comprehension difficulties involved: the missing of, or misuse of, contextual clues; reluctance to ‘make a guess’; positive and negative interference from Japanese; ‘underspecification’; and an inclination to understand metonymies as if they were metaphors. The second part of the study concentrated on the purposes done by metonymy. Twenty-two Japanese learners of English were requested to interpret a set of twenty metonymies, each of which performed a particular function. Metonymies helping compound tasks such as humor, irony and hyperbole were considerably more challenging to comprehend than ones that served more ‘straightforward’ tasks, such as hyperbole and positive evaluation. Comprehension problems were associated to the degree to which the instances disrupted the cognitive principles underlying ‘typical’ vehicle selection. They determined that: “metonymy does indeed present problems to Japanese learners of English. The range of problems that it presents

are comparable to those for metaphor, with some exceptions, notably the fact that metonymy is often interpreted as if it were metaphor.” (p. 12).

### **Dialogic Interactions**

Study in the 1980s and 1990s initiated to use the terms monologic and dialogic to describe classroom talk patterns – monologic being related with teacher authority and recitation and dialogic being related with student freedom and reciprocity. And notably, as Nystrand (2013) described, “This research could not have been done without the Western introduction of Russian philosopher and literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin in the mid-1970s” (p. ix). For Bakhtin (1984), the terms monologic and dialogic indicated a greatly distinction worldview of language, thought, and authority. “Any true understanding,” Bakhtin asserts, “is dialogic in nature” (p. 102, original emphasis). This declaration is introductory for this line of study on classroom talk. What the declaration means, though, needs some background on Bakhtin’s worldview in general. In this paper, dialogic interaction refers to paired activities and group works done in the experimental groups. Here are some related studies on dialogic interactions.

Bakhtin (1984) criticized abstract sights of language – which were sights that cause the diagraming of language consistent with who is speaking to whom, what is understood, the nature of what is thought, and the techniques in which the content of what is understood can be outlined over speech performances. This

attitude to language is methodological and scientific, apparently demanding, but finally imperfect: “One cannot say that these diagrams are false or that they do not correspond to certain aspects of reality. But when they are put forth as the actual whole of speech communication, they become a science fiction” (p. 68). Paradoxically, evaluating language to comprehend language is not proper. Such an orientation causes what Bakhtin considered as vague terms, such as speech, our speech, and speech flow. Although he seldom wrote in methodological terms, Bakhtin was a profound viewer of them in the work of others – and evaluated the work of linguists on those areas. He mentions, “The terminological imprecision and confusion in this methodological central point of linguistic thinking result from ignoring the real unit of speech communication: the utterance” (p. 71).

Choi, Tatar, and Kim (2014) discovered the role of dialogic interactions in enhancing L2 undergraduate students’ classroom contribution at a university in South Korea. Former researches on English-mediated instruction (EMI) have concentrated mainly on the efficiency of instruction, as assessed on the basis of the skills and proficiency levels of the learners or teachers, grounded on the supposition that L2 linguistic competence is the major requirement for fruitful EMI classes. Though, using analysis and interview data of learners’ opinions of dialogic teaching and classroom observation data, they revealed the achievement of dialogic teaching. Their results recommend that L2 speakers can join actively in collaborations in English once the class is



considered systematically to let multiple answers across their former knowledge.

## **METHODS**

### **Participants**

To find answers to the above-mentioned research question, an experimental study has been conducted. A total of 60 female students at intermediate proficiency level from a university in Gorgan, Iran, were selected through convenience sampling. The proficiency level of the participants, who had almost the same educational background and were in the age range of 20 to 35, was determined by the homogeneity test of Quick Oxford Placement Test which was given to 80 Iranian EFL learners and 60 of them were chosen to participate at this study. The participants were divided into three groups each one consisting of 20 learners. The first two groups were considered as the experimental groups while the last one was regarded the control group. The participants in the first group were taught how to use metaphor through dialogic interactions and the members of the second group were given the metonymy treatment through dialogic interactions and finally, the students in the control group were taught based on the usual methodology of the institute which was free of any instruction related to metaphor, metonymy and dialogic interactions.

### **Instrumentation**

### **Quick Oxford Placement Test**

This standard test that enjoys an acceptable validity and reliability was used in this study to homogenize the participants and determine the learners' level of language proficiency. The test consisted of 65 multiple-choice questions including 15 vocabulary questions, 20 grammar questions, and 30 cloze tests.

### **Writing Test**

It is a researcher-developed test in which the participants were required to write about a topic out of 3 given topics. The researcher tried to select general issues such as shopping, education, transportation and entertainment as topics for writing.

To check the face and content validity of this test, three expert English language teachers were asked to give their comments which were applied in the development of the test. To measure its reliability, through a pilot study, this test was given to 20 students. The data gathered were analyzed through KR21 Method in SPSS and it was .84 which was an acceptable index of reliability (Appendix B).

After sampling and homogeneity test, firstly, the participants were given the writing test as the pre-test. Then they were given the treatment. In the first group, the participants were given some instructions on how to use metaphor in their writing through doing some exercises with the help of each other which is named dialogic interactions. For example, while the participants were analyzing the texts to find metaphor, they did it in groups of four learners who could cooperate and talk together

to do this exercise more efficiently. Or when they were trying to come up with some new metaphor, they helped each other in groups of four learners and each group was required to come up with one single piece of writing which was the product of the collective attempts of the members of that group. The same activities done in the first group were applied in the second group too, but metaphor was replaced with metonymy. In other words, in the second group, metonymy was practiced with the help of dialogic interactions. Finally, in the third group which was the control group, the participants were given the usual treatment of the institute in which no focus was on metaphor and metonymy. After 18 sessions of intervention, the term finished and all groups were given the writing test again as the post-test.

### **Design and Analysis**

The present study follows an experimental design since there are treatment and also experimental and control groups. The dependent variable is writing and the independent variable is using metaphor and metonymy. In order to analyze the collected data, the collected data were given to SPSS. First, the data normality of K-S test was run to see whether the data were normal or not. Since the data were normal, thus an ANOVA was run to see whether there would be any difference between the three groups in terms of their writing improvement in pre-test, and then the same ANOVA was run between the post-tests of these three groups.

## **RESULTS**

First, the results of the normality of data tests: K-S and Shapiro Wilk are reported and then since the data were normal, the results of the parametric procedure to find the difference between three groups, ANOVA, are presented.

### **Checking Data Normality**

First of all to check the normality of the data on both writing pre-test and post-test, K-S and Shapiro Wilk tests of normality were carried out. Table 1 presents the results obtained from the analysis of these two tests outputs in SPSS. As it is clear from the table 1, the data obtained from writing pre-test and post-test are normal as the p values (.06 & .20 in K-S and .09 & .54 in Shapiro Wilk) are greater than .05. As the data are normal, parametric statistical analysis was used to find the difference between three groups. In this regard, ANOVA test was conducted.

### **ANOVA for Writing Pre-test**

As mentioned earlier, there are three groups in this study. Before giving treatment to these groups, a writing pre-test was given to them to see whether they differ in writing level. To answer this question or to find out whether these three groups were different in writing level, an ANOVA was run since the data were parametric. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of ANOVA.

**Table 1****Tests of Data Normality**

Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro Wilk		
	Statistic	df	sig.	Statistic	df	sig.
Writing pre test	.187	59	.06	.920	59	.09
Writing post test	.157	59	.20*	.960	59	.54

**Table 2****The Descriptive Statistics of ANOVA for Pre-test**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Lower Bound		
Metaphor	20	74	3.241	.874	70.21	78.47	49	97
Metonymy	20	70	2.985	.541	67.25	73.20	57	95
Control	20	72	3.740	.989	69.87	75.40	46	93
Total	60	72	3.354	.744	70.23	75.35	52	95

As seen in Table 2, the means of these three groups are not that much different, showing that the participants were nearly at the same level of writing. However, to prove it statistically that

there is no difference between these three groups, ANOVA should be presented. Table 3 shows the results of ANOVA.

**Table 3****The results of ANOVA for Pre-test**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	212.57	2	106.34	4.582	.09
Within Groups	1475.52	58	28.653		
Total	1688.09	60			

If p value is bigger than the sig level, then it can be said that there is no significant difference between the groups. For example, according to Table 3, there is no statistically significant difference between these three groups ( $F(2,43) = 4.58, p \leq .05$ ). Thus, it can be said that the three groups were nearly the same in terms of writing before the treatment.

After the treatment, again the participants were given the writing test to find out their level of writing. To find whether there was a difference between three groups in terms of writing, an ANOVA was run. Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of ANOVA for the post-test.

### ANOVA for Writing Post-test

**Table 4**

*The Descriptive Statistics of ANOVA for Post-test*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Metaphor	20	84	4.582	.654	78.31	92.67	58	98
Metonymy	20	82	2.541	.412	68.47	80.20	56	96
Control	20	75	3.470	.740	69.98	81.90	53	94
Total	60	77.66	3.412	.584	71.63	83.05	55.6	96

As seen in Table 4, the means of these three groups are different which can show that the participants were not at the same level of writing in different groups. However, to prove

it statistically that there is a significant difference between these three groups, ANOVA should be presented. Table 5 shows the results of ANOVA.

**Table 5**

*The results of ANOVA for Post-test*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	223.21	2	121.52	3.87	.004
Within Groups	1562.42	58	32.441		
Total	1785.63	60			

If p value is smaller than the sig level, then it can be said that there is a significant difference between the groups. According to Table 5, there is a significant difference between these three groups ( $F(2,43) = 3.87$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ). Thus, it can be said that the three groups

were not the same in terms of writing after the treatment.

To find out where this difference is and what two groups are different, the post hoc test was run. Table 6 shows the results of post hoc test of ANOVA.

**Table 6**

***The Post hoc Test Results***

Group (J)	Group (I-J)	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Mtpm	Mtnm	-2.56*	3.21	.007	-5.77	-2.10
	Cont	8.63*	1.24	.002	.96	2.36
Mtnm	Mtpm	2.56*	3.21	.007	-2.10	-5.77
	Cont	7.41	.845	.041	.52	1.84
Cont	Mtpm	-8.63*	1.24	.002	-2.54	-1.47
	Mtnm	-7.41	.845	.041	2.63	.85

As seen in Table 6, there was no significant difference between the metaphor group and the metonymy group ( $.007 \leq .05$ ) with the metaphor group (Mean=84) being relatively better than the metonymy group (Mean=82) in writing. In addition, there was a significant difference between the metaphor group and the control group, with the metaphor group (Mean=84) being better than the control group (Mean=75) in writing ( $.002 \leq .05$ ). Besides, there was a significant difference between the metonymy group and the control group ( $.041 \geq .05$ ) with the metonymy group (Mean=82) better than the control group (Mean=75).

All in all, the results of this study showed that metaphor and metonymy, as two types of figurative language, through dialogic interactions had significant effects on the participations' writing.

## DISCUSSIONS

The present study revealed that using figurative language through dialogic interactions can help learners improve their writing performance. According to the theoretical underpinnings of dialogic interactions (Bakhtin, 1984), the abstract aspects of language are criticized

which were the issues requiring independent deep thinking. Accordingly, writing alone and passing these abstract stages in writing for learners seem highly complex. Thus, it is expected that learners have difficulty using figurative language in their writing if they get no help from their peers or teachers. As a result, the present study proved that if learners use figurative language through dialogic interactions, they can improve their writing which is in line with the theoretical tenets of dialogic interactions. In addition, one indispensable component of writing is imagination without which writing may not be completed. One of the highly approachable techniques to help learners have vision in their writing is using figurative language. Thus, it can be generally thought that through figurative language, learners' writing can be improved. However, practicing figurative language in writing for learners is considered a difficult task to be done. In this study, it was revealed that dialogic interaction can be introduced as one effective technique to do so since imagination and its related issues requires cooperation so that learners can share their weaknesses and strengths. Therefore, it can be concluded that the results obtained in this study highlight the overriding significance of both figurative language and dialogic interactions for the learners who are interested in improving their writing.

The present study results are in line with Sakui and Gaies's (2003) research on the area of metaphor and writing through self-study by a Japanese EFL teacher and her opinions about writing and teaching writing by analysis of the

metaphors assumed by the teacher in diary entries and interviews. The findings of their study showed that the prominence of teachers' opinions on action and the important association between beliefs, identities and changes in metaphors might be an indication of variations in notions of teaching. In other words, they concluded that metaphor can function as an effective method for teacher to improve their learners' writing which is nearly the same findings revealed in the present study.

In the Iranian context, some studies can be considered as a support to the present study. For example, Ghane Shirazi and Talebizadeh (2013) claimed that second language learners need Metaphorical Competence (MC) which is the capability to understand and employ metaphors in natural communication. They reported that they accomplished to examine the improvement of conceptual fluency and metaphorical competence in Persian students of English. Thus, Ghane et al (2013) could support the present study since both emphasize the significance of metaphor in improving learning a foreign language in different ways. Ghane et al. (2013) highlighted the importance of metaphorical competence in natural communication, while the present study focused on the importance of metaphor in improvement of writing.

## **CONCLUSION**

Regarding the negligence of writing, in today's scope of English language teaching and learning and especially in the Iranian context, the present research could exert academically

valuable finding. The main results suggest that metaphor and metonymy, as two types of figurative language, through dialogic interactions had significant effects on the participations' writing. This finding shows the overriding importance of figurative language which has been widely neglected in foreign language teaching programs in Iran over the previous decades (Farjami, 2012). Thus, it is suggested that teacher education centers pay more attention to figurative language while training new and novice teachers. Besides, it can be interpreted that writing academically is not a pure function of cognitive aspects, but some affective and imaginative issues play an important role in this process. In other words, metaphor and metonymy as two examples of figurative language can be practiced more by teachers in their classes.

In addition, dialogic interaction was reported to be effective in writing improvement among the participants of this study which shows the significance of pair work and other collective activities in the class. Although in recent methods of language teaching, there has been a strong focus on group activities, teachers are well aware of necessity of doing these collective activities in the class, they usually fail to use these activities for writing skill since it is usually deemed as an individual piece of work. All in all, the present research calls for using group work and figurative language in writing training programs that have not been employed in foreign language courses. To sum up, more studies are required to further investigate the potential effects of other types of figurative language on writing and the

possible effects of dialogic interaction on other language skills, i.e., speaking, reading, and listening.

## References

- Alexander, R. (2008). Culture, dialogue and learning: Notes on an emerging pedagogy. In N. Mercer & S. Hodgkinson (Eds.), *Exploring talking school* (pp. 91–114). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Botha, E. (2009). Why metaphor matters in education. *South African of Education*, 29(2), 431-444.
- Buhrke, L., Henkels, L., Klene, J. & Fister, H. (2002). Improving fourth grade students' writing skills and attitudes. M.A. Action Research Project. Saint Xavier University and Skylight Professional Development Field-Based Master's Programs.
- Bullough, R.V., Gitlin, A. (1995). *Becoming a student of teaching: Methodologies for exploring self and school context*. New York: Garland Publishers.
- Choi, J., Tatar, B., & Kim, J. (2014). Dialogic Interactions in the English-Mediated Classroom: A Case Study of a Social Science Class for Engineering Students in Korea. *Asian Social Science*, 10(16), 123-145.
- Cohen, A. D. & Cavalcanti, M. C. (1990). Feedback on compositions: teacher and student verbal reports. In Kroll, B. (Ed.) (1990). *Second language writing: Research insights for the classroom*,

- (pp.155-177). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cortazzi, M., Jin, L. (1999). Bridges to learning: Metaphors of teaching, learning, and language. In L. Cameron, & G. Low (Eds.), *Researching and applying metaphor* (pp. 149-176). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- El-Koumy, Abdel-Salam. (1991). Comparing the effectiveness of three strategies to teaching composition: Guided, free and guided-Free. Unpublished P.H.D. thesis. Faculty of Education, Menoufia University.
- Ellis, R. (1998). The metaphorical constructions of second language learners. *Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Association for Applied Linguistics*, Seattle, WA.
- Farjami, H. (2012). English Learners' Metaphors and Images of Vocabulary Learning. *Sheikhbahae EFL Journal*, 1(2), 75-84.
- Ghane Shirazi, M., & Talebizadeh, M. R. (2013). Developing Intermediate EFL Learners' Metaphorical Competence through Exposure. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 3(1), 135-141.
- Grabe, W. & R. Kaplan. (1996). *Theory and Practice of Writing*. An Applied Linguistic Perspective. London: Longman.
- Guan, J. (2009). The cognitive nature of metonymy and its implications for English vocabulary teaching. *English Language Teaching*, 2(4), 179-188.
- Hyland, K. (2003). Genre based pedagogies: A social response to process. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 12(1), 17-29.
- Kramsch, C., (2003). Metaphor and the subjective construction of beliefs. In: Kalaja, P. & Barcelos, A. M. F. (Eds.). *Beliefs about SLA: New Research Approaches*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Kövecses, Z. (2003). Language figurative thought and cross-cultural comparison. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 18(4), 311-320.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the flesh: The embodied mind and its challenge to western thought*. New York: Basic Books.
- Lakoff, G., Turner, M. (1989). *More than Cool Reason. A field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Littlemore, J. (2009). *Applying cognitive linguistics to second language learning and teaching*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Littlemore, J., Arizono, M., & May, A. (2016). The interpretation of metonymy by Japanese learners of English. *Review of Cognitive Linguistics*, 14(1), 51-72.
- Matsuda, P. K. (2003). Second language writing in twentieth century: A situated historical perspective. In Kroll, B. (ed.). *Exploring the dynamics of second language writing*. (pp.15-34).



- Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.
- Muhammed, A. A. (2015). Paragraph Writing Challenges Faced by University EFL Learners. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, 3(8), 23-27.
- Nacey, S. (2013). *Metaphors in learner English*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Nystrand, M. (2013). Foreword. In *Inspiring dialogue: Talking to learn in the English classroom* (pp.ix-xi). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Oxford, R. L., Tomlinson, S., Barcelos, A., Harrington, C., Roberta, Z., Saleh, L. A., Longhini, A. (1998). Clashing metaphors about classroom teachers: Toward a systematic typology for the language teaching field. *System*, 26(1), 3-50.
- Sakui, K., Gaies, S. (2003). A case study: Beliefs and metaphors of a Japanese teacher of English. In: Kalaja, P. & Barcelos, A. M. F. (Eds.). *Beliefs about SLA: New Research Approaches*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer, 153-170.
- Sharadgah, T. A. (2013). Writing in an Internet-Based Environment: Improving EFL Students' Writing Performance through Text-Based Chat. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(14), 258-269.
- Shokouhi, H., & Isazadeh, M. (2009). The Effect of Teaching Conceptual and Image Metaphors to EFL Learners. *The Open Applied Linguistics Journal*, 2(3), 22-31.
- Silva, T. (1993). Toward an understanding of the distinct nature of second language writing: The ESL research and its implications. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27(1), 657 – 677.
- Ting, M., & Qian, Y. (2010). A case study of peer feedback in a Chinese EFL writing classroom. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 33(4), 87-99.

**Biodata**

**Ms Nasrin Jenabagha** is a Ph.D student of TEFL at Islamic Azad University, Qaemshahr Branch and a faculty member of TEFL at Islamic Azad University, Ali Abad Katoul Branch. Her main areas of interest include writing, writing problems, figurative language and teaching methods.

Email: [Njenabagh@gmail.com](mailto:Njenabagh@gmail.com)

**Dr Shaban Najafi Karimi** is an assistant professor of TEFL at Islamic Azad University, Qaemshahr Branch. His research interests include language skills, discourse analysis, materials development, and teacher education. He has been teaching English at Iranian universities for 24 years and has published in both Iranian and International journals.

Email: [s.najafi.k@qaemiau.ac.ir](mailto:s.najafi.k@qaemiau.ac.ir)

**Dr Amir Marzban** is an associate professor of TESOL at Islamic Azad University, Qaemshahr branch. His research interests include conversation analysis, L2 reading & writing, CALL, and teacher education. He has published in both Iranian and International journals and also has presented in many international conferences.

Email: [amir\\_marzban@yahoo.com](mailto:amir_marzban@yahoo.com)

