Initiating the Development of EFL Students' Writing Beliefs through Sharing Metaphors

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The current study was designed to unveil a group of EFL students' metaphors for English writing and determine whether engaging in peer dialogues helped students to modify their beliefs and practices. It was found that about one third of the elicited metaphors carried a negative tone towards English writing. The metaphor-sharing dialogues among peers were found to help students (1) find unexpected and interesting metaphors; (2) find common ground and support; (3) face and examine one's feelings about writing; and (4) devise plans and/or make changes to writing beliefs. Pedagogical issues as well as future research directions are discussed to conclude the paper.

Key Words: beliefs, metaphors, metaphor sharing

1 Introduction

Students' beliefs about themselves and learning have long been linked to levels of academic success (Breen, 2001; Cotterall, 1995). One way to unveil these personal myths (Bernat and Gvozdenko, 2005) is to study students' metaphors of a particular topic. Defined as "the characterization of a phenomenon in familiar terms" (Dickmeyer, 1989, p. 151, as cited in Farrell, 2006), metaphor involves using a word or phrase to refer to another thing in order to show or suggest that they are similar (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). In the realm of writing research, metaphors have been employed to understand both native (Armstrong, 2007, 2008; Hart, 2009; Levin & Wagner, 2006; Paulson & Armstrong, 2011) and non-native (Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005; Wan, 2014; Zhao, 2007, 2009) English-speaking students' writing beliefs. In these studies, once metaphors were collected from students, a metaphor analysis (Cameron & Low, 1999; Paulson & Armstrong, 2011) was

usually performed to categorize these metaphors for further analysis. The ultimate goal of these studies is to better understand students' beliefs and devise ways to tackle those which are unrealistic, uninformed, or negative (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005).

An emerging theme in this line of research involves students sharing their metaphors with their peers (Hart, 2009; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005; Wan, 2014). An important finding is that sharing metaphors in peer groups led to positive changes in students' perceptions about writing; some students were also found to devise plans to take actions to improve their writing (Hart, 2009). The current study will continue this line of inquiry by investigating if formulating and sharing self-beliefs about writing via metaphorical conceptualization helps a group of Sophomore English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) university students to develop their writing beliefs and practices.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Background

The current study is grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. In this view, the cognitive and the social are two inseparable domains which enjoy a "seamless and dialectic relationship" (Lantolf, 2000, p. 79; also see de Guerrero & Villamil, 2002; Wong, 2006), and "not only does our mental activity determine the nature of our social world, but this world of human relationships and artifacts also determines to a large extent how we regulate our mental processes." As Lantolf (2000) explains, humans use symbols, such as numbers, music, art, and language, to regulate, or "to establish an indirect, or mediated, relationship between ourselves and the world" (p. 80). These artifacts or tools are products created by the human culture(s) which are modified and then passed to future generations, and metaphor is one of these tools. Like other mediational tools, metaphors are often acquired in the intermental domain to guide an individual's ways of knowing, making sense of the world, and behaving (de Guerrero and Villamil, 2001). As Cameron (1999) summarizes, "Vygotskyan notions of the interactive nature of the relation of language and thought, and 'the social formation of mind'…, can be used to construct theory-level frameworks for metaphor that integrate the socio-cultural and the cognitive" (p. 12).

In their seminal work Metaphors we live by, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) discuss examples of metaphor in our daily life and how they mediate our thinking, perceiving, and acting. Like de Guerrero and Villamil (2001), Lakoff and Johnson also assert that metaphors "provide ways of comprehending experience; they give order to our lives…[and] are necessary

for making sense of what goes on around us" (pp. 185-186). The use of metaphors is not only pervasive in our daily life. In fact, metaphor has been used to structure our thoughts and behaviors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Zhao (2007) uses the common conceptual metaphor "Time is money" to explain how it was used three decades ago as a slogan by the communist Chinese government to try to change Chinese people's mentality for a higher working efficiency at the onset of the Chinese economic reform. In other words, metaphor is seen as capable of transforming mental functioning (Wertsch, 1985).

2.2 Methodological Issues for Using Metaphors to Investigate Beliefs

In terms of methodology, there are two common methods of collecting metaphors from participants. The first one requires the identification of the so-called "spontaneous metaphors." This involves extracting instances of metaphors from naturally occurring discourses, such as conversations, lecture talks, interviews, and personal narratives (e.g., Armstrong, 2008; Sasaki, 2010; Zhao, 2007, 2009). In the second approach, prompts, such as "An ESL teacher is like…" (de Guerrero & Villamil, 2002) and "Writing is…because…" (Wan, 2014), are developed by the researchers for participants to complete. The results are a list of elicited metaphors which the researchers may further analyze according to semantic meanings (Paulson and Armstrong, 2011) or other schemes. Compared with the first method, the second method is more straightforward, as researchers do not have to code spontaneous discourses (Wan, 2014). This study mainly adopted the metaphor elicitation technique.

Albeit its straightforward nature, some experts in the field (e.g., Todd & Low, 2010; Wan, 2011, 2014) have issued a word of caution on the metaphor elicitation technique which has become quite popular in educational research over the years. It was found that the informants in some studies (for example, Todd and Low, 2010; Wan, 2011) might have inadequate knowledge about a given topic (e.g., academic writing) or the concept of metaphor; some were found to supply an answer with no metaphor ("English writing is complicated"). These invalid responses suggest that the metaphor elicitation technique is by no means transparent and unproblematic. A possible solution is the implementation of some training or prior discussions on the basic concepts and examples (Wan, 2011). Once the metaphors are collected, follow-up interviews can also take place to further clarify issues with the participants (Wan, 2014).

2.3 Common Writing Metaphors

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Many writing experts have proposed metaphors for writing. Since much writing done in academic and professional contexts involves the development of an argument, Zhao (2007) applies Ungerer and Schmid's (1996) four metaphors of argument to discuss how writing can be conceptualized through metaphors. In this scheme, writing is compared to a journey (e.g., "to arrive at a conclusion"; "to set out to prove our point"), a battle (e.g., "to defend your position"; "to attack every weak point of the argument"), a container (e.g., "Your argument is vacuous"), and a building (e.g., "It is still so shaky that it will easily fall apart under criticism").

Another common writing metaphor is related to the process of baking or cooking. One such example is provided by one of McCarthey's (1994) participants who was a pre-service teacher enrolled in a writing project. She used the metaphor of making homemade bread to a class of fifth/sixth-graders in the United States to demonstrate the essence of effective writing (p. 598):

> It's like you start off with this lump of dough, and you have the yeast and the flour and the water, and then you like knead it and pull it and push it in different directions. I know when I first made bread, I couldn't believe that lump of stuff was ever going to be a loaf of bread…And sometimes I think about my notebook that way. Like I'm starting with this thing here, and I don't know yet what it's going to turn out to be. I'm going to work with it for awhile. I might push it and pull it and stretch it and try to think about it in different ways.

Likewise, some of Wan's (2007) Chinese EFL students were found to compare writing to cooking, which like baking, involved blending of ingredients, waiting for the finished product, and making adjustments for future trials. In summary, these metaphors all helped to unveil students' conceptions on writing.

2.4 Peer Mediation through Sharing Writing Metaphors

One line in the research of writing metaphors is how peer-peer dialogic interaction helps those involved to articulate and perhaps reformulate their beliefs. Peers can mediate each other's learning if they engage in what Swain (1997) calls "collaborative dialogue," in which "learners work together to solve linguistic problems and/or co-construct language or knowledge about language" (Swain et al., 2002, p. 172). Peer mediation finds support from an "enlarged" notion of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005) "as a site of potential learning that is created when

participants of all ages and levels—not just children and adults, or novices and experts—collaborate in understanding a concept or solving a problem" (pp. 79-80). In other words, like adults and experts, peers are also capable of promoting each other's learning (Villamil & de Guerrero, 2006). In fact, Vygotsky himself did not limit mediation in the ZPD to only experts or adults. He once remarked (1978, p. 90):

> We propose that an essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate not only when the child is interacting with people in his environment but also in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's developmental achievement.

One study which has identified the potential of peer mediation is Villamil and de Guerrero's (2005) study of 10 Puerto Rican MATESOL student teachers enrolled in a 15-week course on ESL writing. On three occasions during the course of the semester, participants were asked to respond to the prompts "An ESL writer is like…" and "An ESL writing teacher is like…" in their introspective learning logs. In the tenth week, they were invited to share their metaphors with the class. It was found that many participants recognized and adopted their classmates' metaphors after the sharing session. As one student remarked, "My peers wrote metaphors that adequately represented my feelings about being an ESL writing teacher and an ESL writing student" (p. 84). In other cases, learning about others' metaphors helped some participants to clarify their thoughts about being an ESL writer and teacher. Ample evidence was found to support Ball's (2000) idea of appropriation in which "people appropriate ways of thinking by first experiencing them on the interpsychological (social) plane and then reconstructing them as personal tools on the intrapsychological plane" (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000, pp. 10-11). In terms of producing metaphors, Villamil and de Guerrero (2005) see appropriation as involving "reconstruction and reflective commitment and not mindless repetition of others' words" (p. 86). This in-depth internalization was also found to include participants' reformulation of action plans to modify their instruction in the future.

Another study which also involved peer-peer dialogic interaction was conducted by Wan (2014) in a British university. Seven master's students from mainland China participated in the study. Like the participants in Villamil and de Guerrero's (2005) study, Wan's students provided individual metaphors on writing as well as engaged in group discussions of their personal metaphors. Wan (2014) found that the peer talks on personal metaphors helped participants to (1) concretize and synthesize concepts of writing; (2) recognize personal writing problems; (3) gain confidence in

writing; (4) enhance their ability to think critically; and (5) formulate plans to implement their newly formed views on writing. Wan (2014) concluded that this form of metaphor-oriented pedagogical intervention is beneficial for transforming learners' views on writing.

In the previous section, I have provided a review on the relevant theoretical and methodological issues related to using metaphors as a way to investigate students' personal beliefs. Prevalent writing metaphors as well as relevant previous studies were also discussed. In the next section, I will explain the rationale and purpose of the current study as well as the data collection and analysis methods.

3   The Current Study

Guided by sociocultural theory, the current study intended to investigate students' writing metaphors and their experiences and perceived gains of sharing metaphors with their peers. The two guiding research questions are:

(1) What were students' metaphors for English writing and what did these metaphors tell us about their beliefs in English writing?
(2) How did students perceive the experience of sharing metaphors with their peers? What did they think they learned from this activity?

4 Methodology

4.1 Participants

An intact class of 19 students (6 males and 13 females; a pseudonym was assigned to each student) who enrolled in the researcher's Sophomore English writing course in a Taiwanese university were recruited to participate in the study. The participants, aged between 18 and 20, shared the same first language (Mandarin Chinese) and learning history (English majors in a vocational-track university which takes the top 20 percent students in Taiwan). Before taking Sophomore English writing, they have taken Freshman English writing with another instructor in the previous school year. From this course and other related ones, they have gained some basic understanding and experience about writing in English. As all students have taken two freshman-level courses (Basic English and English Vocabulary & Reading) with the researcher-instructor, they were familiar with her and her teaching style.

4.2 Data Collection

In the first class meeting in the beginning of the semester, approximately thirty minutes were spent on explaining the concept of metaphor and examples to illustrate this form of figurative language (see Appendix A for the instructional material that was used in this training session). Then, each student wrote his/her response to the prompt: "English writing is like…" and shared it with his/her self-selected group members (each group consisted of 4 to 6 students). The prompt was given in English, while students could use either Chinese or English to complete the metaphor task as well as the discussion activity. Their dialogues were recorded and transcribed later by students themselves. Students were told to complete the transcription when their memory was still fresh. Once the transcription was completed, each group member needed to review it and wrote a short composition to reflect on the experience. Their transcripts and reflective narratives, along with their metaphors, were collected in the following week.

4.3 Data Analysis

Metaphors collected from students' responses were analyzed following the method of "metaphor analysis" which involves "collecting examples of linguistic metaphors used to talk about the topic" and "generalising from them to the conceptual metaphors they exemplify, and using the result to suggest understandings or thought patterns which construct or constrain people's beliefs and actions" (Cameron & Low, 1999, p. 88). This method typically utilizes the notion of "conceptual metaphor" to refer to the "connection between two semantic areas at the level of thought" (Deignan et al., 1997, p. 352) and "linguistic metaphor" as the specific metaphorical expressions. In this line of research, conceptual metaphors are represented in capital letters (e.g., COLLEGE READING IS A JOURNEY) while linguistic metaphors are denoted by italics (e.g., College reading is like a highway; see de Guerrero & Villamil, 2002; Paulson & Armstrong, 2011). Such notation will be adopted to present the findings of this study.

To code all the metaphors from students' responses, the first step was to make a list of all the linguistic metaphors provided by students from the initial metaphor elicitation task. Special attention was paid to the vocabulary (including nouns and adjectives) used by students and the common features in their linguistic metaphors. A recursive process (de Guerrero & Villamil, 2002) then occurred to try to decide category labels (i.e., conceptual metaphors) and their tokens (i.e., linguistic metaphors). Following Paulson and Armstrong (2011), all the linguistic metaphors, once identified and put into conceptual categories, were also classified as negative or nonnegative. Such categorization serves the purpose of revealing students' general dispositions on English writing. The coding, including categorizing linguistic metaphors to conceptual metaphors and labeling them as nonnegative or

negative, was shown to an expert on metaphorical language. Any disagreement was discussed until consensus was reached.

Next, transcripts of students' dialogues and each student's reflective narrative were read. After meticulous readings of these two data sets, it was found the group dialogues mainly contained exchanges to clarify each other's metaphor and the reflective narratives mainly contained students' remarks on participating in the metaphor-sharing activity. Important themes pertaining to the two research questions were highlighted and noted on the margins of the hard copy. The findings will be reported in the next section.

5 Findings

5.1 RQ (1): Students' Metaphors for English Writing

Students' metaphors reveal that English writing has been conceptualized as GAMING ACTIVITY, SPORT, MEDICATION, CREATION PROCESS, NURTURING PROCESS, and UNPLEASANT ENTITY. In terms of the negative/nonnegative categorization (Paulson and Armstrong, 2011), there were 7 metaphors which were overtly negative, while 12 ranging from overly positive (e.g., English writing is like weaving for me. Each word is like a thread and I can use them to weave a great cloth) to neutral (e.g., English writing is like building a house. You start from the foundations). According to Paulson and Armstrong (2011), the latter two were categorized as nonnegative. Appendix B summarizes the results.

It should be noted that similar metaphors under the same conceptual category can be negative or nonnegative. It can be seen from Appendix B that Jennifer compared English writing to hiking. In the original elicitation task, she wrote, "English writing is like hiking for me. When I write, I am like an exhausted hiker, trying to get to the top of the mountain. I have to rack my brain and make great efforts to get to the top." The words "exhausted" and "rack my brain" suggest a negative semantic meaning; therefore, Jennifer's metaphor was categorized as negative. On the other hand, Frank wrote, "I think writing is like climbing a mountain. If you work harder, you will learn more," and Stanley wrote, "I am like a mountain climber when I write. Step by step, I used my own feet to reach the peak." The neutral tone of their remarks was quite different from the negative words used by Jennifer, and they were categorized as nonnegative.

Also, to determine whether a metaphor is negative or nonnegative, further reading of other data sources, including transcriptions of group discussion and students' reflective narratives, was undertaken. Take Wendy's metaphor for example. In her initial response to the prompt, she wrote, "English writing is like drinking cough syrup. When you first begin to write, you feel very painful. But when you are done, you feel relieved." Upon reading this, it was difficult to judge whether this statement was negative or

nonnegative. Her reflective narrative was read to look for more evidence. She wrote, "When I write, I am like an anxious patient. I am afraid of making mistakes, so I always struggle to write correctly even though I know I can just express myself the best I can." The keywords, including "anxious," "afraid of making mistakes," and "struggle," suggest that this metaphor be categorized as negative. This example also illustrates the importance of having multiple data when looking into students' beliefs through metaphors and other mediational tools.

The analysis yielded 7 overtly negative metaphors, and they were:

(a) Jennifer: *English writing is like hiking for me. When I write, I am like an exhausted hiker, trying to get to the top of the mountain. I have to rack my brain and make great efforts to get to the top.*

(b) Wendy: *English writing is like drinking cough syrup. When you first begin to write, you feel very painful. But when you are done, you feel relieved.*

(c) Connie: *English writing is like a trap for me. When I write, I am like an animal which will fall down and be caught by the trap.*

(d) Mike: *English writing is like drinking bitter tea. The older people tell you that drinking it is good for your health. But once you drink it, you realize that it is more bitter than you have imagined and you have no choice but to finish it.*

(e) Randy: *English writing is like walking on thin ice for me. When I write, I am like an idiot who doesn't know how to walk.*

(f) Ruby: *English writing is like a monster that I am scared of. I always think too much before writing and worry about the time.*

(g) Mandy: *English writing is like working overtime endlessly. You can't finish a task within the set time and you have to work overtime to try to meet the deadline.*

These negative metaphors deserve some attention, as one of the purposes of unveiling students' writing beliefs is to help them deal with negative ones (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005). They will be discussed later.

5.2 RQ (2): Students' Perceptions of Perceived Gains from Sharing Metaphors with Their Peers

Students were divided into four groups for the metaphor sharing activity (Group 1: Ruby, Cindy, Susan, and Megan; Group 2: Jennifer, Wendy, Connie, Ken, Alice, and Amy; Group 3: Stanley, Lily, Iris, and Frank; Group 4: Mike, Ben, Randy, Julie, and Mandy). In their reflective narratives, many commented that the metaphor sharing activity was a novel and fun experience for them. Connie even urged other students to engage in metaphor

sharing; she wrote in her reflection, "Metaphor reflects your mind and attitude. Create your own metaphor and share you feeling." The transcription process was also discussed by Ruby and Megan as a rare opportunity for them to listen to audio recordings of their speech. Even though both students were speaking Chinese at the time of recording, they found that they need to try to express their ideas with less fillers and in a more efficient manner in the future.

Students' remarks on their reflective narratives demonstrate the value of sharing one's metaphor with others. The following sections will delineate the benefits discussed by students.

5.2.1 Finding unexpected and interesting metaphors from peers

Some students wrote in their reflective narratives that they were surprised and delighted upon learning about their peers' metaphors:

(1) Before the activity began, I thought my friends would share similar ideas about writing. I was wrong. Their answers were full of imagination! (Ruby)

(2) One team member and I talked about having to finish compositions in a certain time limit. However, other team members think they are doing interesting work when writing. They create everything they want in their writing. (Cindy)

(3) From my classmates, I learned many interesting metaphors. One thinks it's a difficult task filled with a lot of traps because during the process of translating Chinese into English, you may make many grammatical and syntactical mistakes (Julie).

5.2.2 Finding common ground and support

Learning about peers' metaphors also provides emotional support for some students. They also uttered "words of hope," anticipating that their writing course would help them become better writers.

(1) From this sharing session, I feel that everyone is struggling with English writing. I hope we can make great improvement and gain confidence together from this writing course. (Julie)

(2) I noticed that everyone is afraid of English writing, not just me. I hope we will help each other learn this semester. (Mandy)

5.2.3 Facing and examining one's feelings about writing

Another affective benefit was that students had the opportunity to reflect on their feelings about English writing.

> (1) I always think that English writing is a nightmare for me. However, when I am doing this assignment, I recall the time when I have to write in English. Although it is difficult for me, it's still fun to me. I'm not sure what the reason is…I think I'll keep writing in English because it's a kind of joy in my life. (Susan)
>
> (2) I think this activity makes me think and face my feelings about English writing. I can clearly know what I feel about it and know what I should do to improve. (Jennifer)

5.2.4 Devising plans and/or making changes to beliefs about writing

Learning others' metaphors was also beneficial on the metacognitive level. The following two examples show that students became more aware of themselves as writers and were ready to make some changes.

> (1) After sharing with my group members, I found that although there are many challenges for me when writing in English, I can just express what I want to say and not afraid of making mistakes. (Wendy)
>
> (2) From sharing with my friends, I know my weaknesses and I can improve by learning from them. (Ken)

6 Discussion

One of the purposes of this study was to understand how students conceptualized English writing through the use of metaphors. On the conceptual level, English writing was compared to GAMING ACTIVITY, SPORT, MEDICATION, CREATION PROCESS, NURTURING PROCESS, and UNPLEASANT ENTITY. Seven out of 19 metaphors were further categorized as negative. These students seemed to communicate a sense of helplessness and disempowerment when they had to write in English. English writing was either something forced upon them (for Wendy, Mike, and Mandy), a challenging and unpleasant physical activity (for Jennifer and Randy), or a dangerous object (for Connie and Ruby). Take Connie's metaphor for example. English writing was compared to a trap. She felt that when she writes in English, she is like an animal who may fall down and get caught by the trap. In the group sharing, Connie further explained that the trap is all the unfamiliar rules and "exceptions" to those rules. To help learners like Connie, besides providing guidance to establish a fundamental understanding of the language, teachers probably need to expose them to the

form-meaning-use connection (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). In other words, students need to learn how a language unit is formed, what the unit means in a specific context, and when and why it is used. This enlarged view of grammar can help students gain a more holistic view of the English language and appreciate the functional and communicative dimension of the language.

The feeling of being pressed for time was also expressed in some students' metaphors. For example, when explaining her "English writing as a monster" metaphor, Ruby wrote, "When I write, I am like a student who is taking an exam and the time is almost up. I always worry about time." Another student, Mandy, explained, "I am always so pressed for time when it comes to writing. I need to finish it in a specific time frame and I am always in a hurry." It is unclear where these feelings came from. One possible reason may be the long tradition of asking students to write timed essays in both Chinese and English classes in Taiwan. In college-level EFL writing classes where instructors often have more freedom to decide what to teach, instructors need to spare time to infuse the idea that we write for many purposes, not just for writing timed essays and for exam purposes. Depending on the levels of the students, essential writing skills, such as looking for valid information online, reporting, summarizing, and paraphrasing, also need to be taught thoroughly to enable students to write in a more effective and efficient manner.

The findings of the current study shed some light on how peer dialogues about one's beliefs could foster the development of positive beliefs. As mentioned earlier, 7 negative metaphors were found in the initial elicitation task. In the case of Jennifer who compared English writing to an exhausting hike, she realized that her fear for English writing was not unusual, but it is something that should be dealt with. Instead of being consumed by their fear, she hoped that she could learn more knowledge and skills from the writing course to combat her fear.

In their oral sharing sessions, some students (e.g., Ruby & Cindy) certainly noticed that not everyone viewed English writing negatively. In fact, many metaphors consisted of positive images and lively language that were enjoyable to read. The metaphor sharing session was not only beneficial for fostering a more positive orientation toward English writing; for Susan who uttered a nonnegative belief initially, she remarked that these positive peer comments help to validate her own feelings about English writing. Through the completion of this task, she was able to recall the fun and joy she had with writing and said that she should continue to write.

Metacognitively, sharing and learning about others' metaphors also prompted some students to decide to take actions to improve their writing skills. For example, for Wendy who began by comparing writing to taking cough syrup, she felt that she should try to express herself without worrying about making mistakes all the time. This process illustrates the fact that

formulating and sharing one's metaphor has the potential for inducing experiential learning to take place (Kolb, 1984). According to Kolb and his associates, experiential learning begins with completing an assigned task (Kolb, 1984; Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001). Then, learners engage in reflection to form abstract concepts to make sense of what has happened. The final stage involves forming plans for future experimentation. These plans for action also provide evidence for the birth of what Villamil and de Guerrero (2005) call the in-depth internalization, an important initial step to make personal changes. They also illustrate how something experienced first on the interpersonal level can then be internalized to make changes on the personal level (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000).

One final note is about the data collection methods employed in this study. Besides collecting students' metaphors from the metaphor elicitation task, students were also asked to transcribe their group discussions and provide reflective remarks on their group transcripts. This transcription task seemed to allow students to pay more attention to what was written by themselves during the individual metaphor elicitation task as well as to what others said in their group sharing. In other words, this task is conducive to clarifying one's own metaphors as well as noticing and learning about others' metaphors. Future research can consider incorporating this task into their research design to collect more insights into the participants' inner world.

7 Conclusion

This study began with a simple motivation of learning how students felt about English writing and whether the pedagogical activity of sharing one's metaphors could impact students' conceptualizations in any way. It was found that students' metaphors provided many insights into their beliefs of English writing. This study also looked into whether the sharing of metaphors among group members was beneficial for students. Positive evidence of collaborative dialogue (Swain, 1997) was found to support the implementation of such a pedagogical task. Although the study did not find evidence to support the transformation of belief from every of the seven students who first had a negative conceptualization, it was found that for Jennifer , Wendy, and Mandy, this full cycle of metaphor task, which encompassed eliciting, sharing, transcribing and reflecting, helped to plant the seed for more positive thinking and action toward English writing.

Future research can take on the possibilities of employing other intervention methods (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005) and data collection methods (Wan, 2014), such as keeping a reflective journal or administering a survey of learners' literacy histories. For writing teachers, the activities outlined in this study, including the metaphor elicitation task and sharing session, can be implemented in the beginning of the semester to understand students' initial conceptions of English writing as well as the range of

instructional activities that can be included. Although it is often said that existing beliefs are often quite entrenched, negative beliefs can still be addressed and perhaps changed, and those students who hold nonnegative beliefs also benefit from supportive peer talk and reflection.

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Appendix
Training material for metaphor

Part I:
1. What is a metaphor?
   From *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*:
   (a) a word or phrase for one thing that is used to refer to another thing in order to show or suggest that they are similar
   (b) an object, activity, or idea that is used as a symbol of something else
   (c) "He was drowning in paperwork" is a *metaphor* in which having to deal with a lot of paperwork is being compared to drowning in an ocean of water.
2. In educational research, metaphor has been used to uncover the informants' beliefs on a given topic.
   Examples:
   (a) Farrell, (2006)—teacher as *mother*, teacher as *General*, teacher as *culture broker*
   (b) Paulson and Armstrong (2011):
      ◆ College reading is like *playing soccer*, because you play soccer to win and you read books to become successful.
      ◆ College reading is like *water*. Even if you don't like it, it's essential.
      ◆ College reading is like *going somewhere with no directions*.
3. What is not a metaphor?
   (a) Writing is complicated.
   (b) Writing is challenging.
   (c) Writing is brainstorming.
   (d) Writing is imagination.
   ● Remember, you need to compare writing to another thing to show that they are similar (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*).

Part II:
Now let's turn to you. Please complete the following prompt: English writing is like…" You can also provide reasons for your metaphor.

Cheryl Wei-yu Chen

Appendix B
Categorization of students' metaphors on English writing

Conceptual metaphor	Linguistic metaphor	Negative/Nonnegative categorization
ENGLISH WRITING IS A GAMING ACTIVITY	(1) *English writing is like a maze* (Ben)	Nonnegative
	(2) *English writing is like playing an online game* (Susan)	Nonnegative
		Nonnegative
	(3) *English writing is like a jigsaw puzzle* (Cindy)	
ENGLISH WRITING IS A SPORT	(1) *English writing is like hiking* (Jennifer)	Negative
	(2) *English writing is like climbing a mountain* (Frank & Stanley)	Nonnegative
ENGLISH WRITING IS MEDICATION	(1) *English writing is like taking cough syrup* (Wendy)	Negative
	(2) *English writing is like taking pills* (Julie)	Nonnegative
ENGLISH WRITING IS CREATION PROCESS	(1) *English writing is like building a house* (Megan & Lily)	Nonnegative
	(2) *English writing is like weaving* (Amy)	Nonnegative
		Nonnegative
	(3) *English writing is like drawing* (Ken)	
ENGLISH WRITING IS NURTURING PROCESS	(1) *English writing is like raising pets* (Alice)	Nonnegative
	(2) *English writing is like raising plants* (Iris)	Nonnegative

ENGLISH WRITING IS AN UNPLEASANT ENTITY	(1) *English writing is like a trap* (Connie)	Negative
	(2) *English writing is like bitter tea* (Mike)	Negative
	(3) *English writing is like walking on thin ice* (Randy)	Negative
	(4) *English writing is like a monster* (Ruby)	Negative
	(5) *English writing is like never-ending overtime* (Mandy)	Negative