

# A Descriptive Analysis of the Formation of Metaphors in Academic Writing

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## ABSTRACT:

This paper investigates studies on metaphors in academic writing by adopting Fink's (2005) definition of a systematic literature review (SLR) in discussing the selected research categories. The subject of interest is the first stage under SLR termed as planning. This stage explores the research objective as well as detailed procedures in terms of protocols and exercises implemented in the preferred studies. The planning stage aims to elaborate on the idea of metaphors production more explicitly and comprehensively while maintaining its prime relevance for future studies. Findings reveal that past research was analysed through keywords of "Metaphors in Academic Writing Among Students", which involves the production of metaphors in academic writing in the field of Science, English language, Economics, Second Language Learning and general academic discourse. Semantics is a discipline that explores aspects of meaning and thought. However, the SLR method is rarely explored in the field. In critically describing metaphors in academic writing, previous studies are required to be analytically and systematically elaborated using the SLR method as suggested by Fink (2005). Therefore, this research can serve as a pioneer in studies related to the usage of metaphors in academic writing.

## Keywords:

Metaphors, academic writing, Semantics, systematic literature review, planning stage.

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## INTRODUCTION

Authors accomplish writing through a series of complex and novel higher-order thinking dexterities which necessitate their imagination, state of mind, preference and cognitive level (Kozlow & Bellamy, 2004). In producing high-quality academic writings, authors play a role in extracting, enhancing, and shaping ideas into informative write-ups meeting the readership needs (Osman et al., 2019a, Che Teh et al. (2017), Mat et al. (2015). Raimes (1983) explains that writing is not innately acquired unlike speaking, it demands a certain level of intellectual capacity in employing vocabulary and lexicons in drafting academic writing (Alaa et al., 2020, Mohammad et al., 2020, Sarudin et al., 2012, 2013, 2019b). Thus, the application of high order thinking skills (HOTS) is assessed in terms of idea delivery, language proficiency, intellect and contemporary choice of vocabularies. A detailed outlook of academic writing enables researchers to evaluate

and analyse variations of higher-order thinking elements (Redzwan et al., 2020) in enhancing the quality of academic content (Zaini et al., 2020). Teacher educators engage in sustained professional learning and play a role as curriculum makers in response to the curriculum reform to includes variations of higher-order thinking elements (Widodo & Alammakhrakh, 2020, Ayob, 2018, 2019, Yamirudeng & Osman, 2019, Zulkifli et al (2019)). The elements of HOTS serve as an evaluation in reassuring the academic quality of any research output. The aspect of meanings from metaphors emphasised as one of the elements of HOTS is analysed extensively under Semantics by extracting lexicons used by students (Sarudin et al., 2020; Maluleke et al., 2019; Erol & Velioglu, 2019; Garidzirai et al., 2019). The creation of metaphors is one of the crucial elements in researching the idea of cognitive semantics.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphors exist in the daily lives of human beings not only in language but also in thinking and behaviour. Three factors influence the production of metaphors, namely social, cognitive and language (Shu, 2000; Banseng & Sandai, 2017). Human communication contributes to the social factor through language as a tool. By showcasing one's artistic language mastery and impressive education exposure, metaphors are applied to elevate one's social status. On the other hand, the factor of cognitive is derived from the theory of perceptual limitation and scientific perception (Redzwan et al., 2018). In the theory of perceptual limitation, metaphors are produced when human perception is limited; hence, resorting to the association of two different objects into one. In learning and adding more in-depth experience, humans compare and contrast between both objects resulting in the birth of metaphors.

Shu (2000:109) divides the language factor into two distinct reasons. Firstly, the lack of lexicons led to the borrowing of other lexical items resulting in many lexical-based metaphors that explain new concepts. Secondly, the language user attempts at seeking a better lexical item, more effective or less invasive in strengthening the explanation of a concept, especially in writing (Sarudin et al., 2019a). The type of language is termed as a figurative language where users employ metaphors to understand a subject matter better. Humans conceptual system, the way they think and act are based on metaphors naturally.

Many previous studies have investigated the creation of metaphors from various media namely by Md. Idris et al (2020), Prayitno (2019), Huang and Tsing Tse (2017), Zheng and Song (2010), Hoang (2014), Coëgnarts and Kravanja (2012), Anderson (2011), Surip dan Mulyadi (2019), Puschmann and Burgees (2014), and Antuñano (2013). However, researchers have yet to carry out an extensive analysis of the production of

metaphors in academic writing. Therefore, descriptive analysis in the production of metaphors is of prime significance in improving the quality of academic writing. The field of Semantics always deals with the fundamental of meanings and thoughts, but it has never analysed from the perspective of systematic literature review (SLR) as proposed by Fink (2005). In critically describing metaphors in academic writing, previous studies were analytically and systematically elaborated using the SLR method. In fulfilling this research void, the present study aspires to pioneer related studies on the production of metaphors in academic writing based on the levels of planning as proposed in Fink's model under the SLR method.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this study is to assess how important the production of metaphors weigh in academic writing based on past studies through the planning stages under the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method according to Fink's (2005) Model. The process begins with filtering 200 articles containing keywords of '*Metaphors in Writing*', '*Range of Metaphors in Formal Writing*', followed by '*Metaphors in Writing among Students*', and finally '*Metaphors in Academic Writing among Students*'. All these articles were published between 2010 to 2019 on websites of *Springer*, *Oxford*, *Research Gate*, *Eric.edu* and *ASSEHR*.

### **DEVELOPING RESEARCH QUESTIONS ACCORDING TO THE SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW (SLR) METHOD BY FINK 2005**

The research questions are formed based on the planning stages under systematic literature review (SLR) as proposed by Fink (2005). These research questions are as follows:

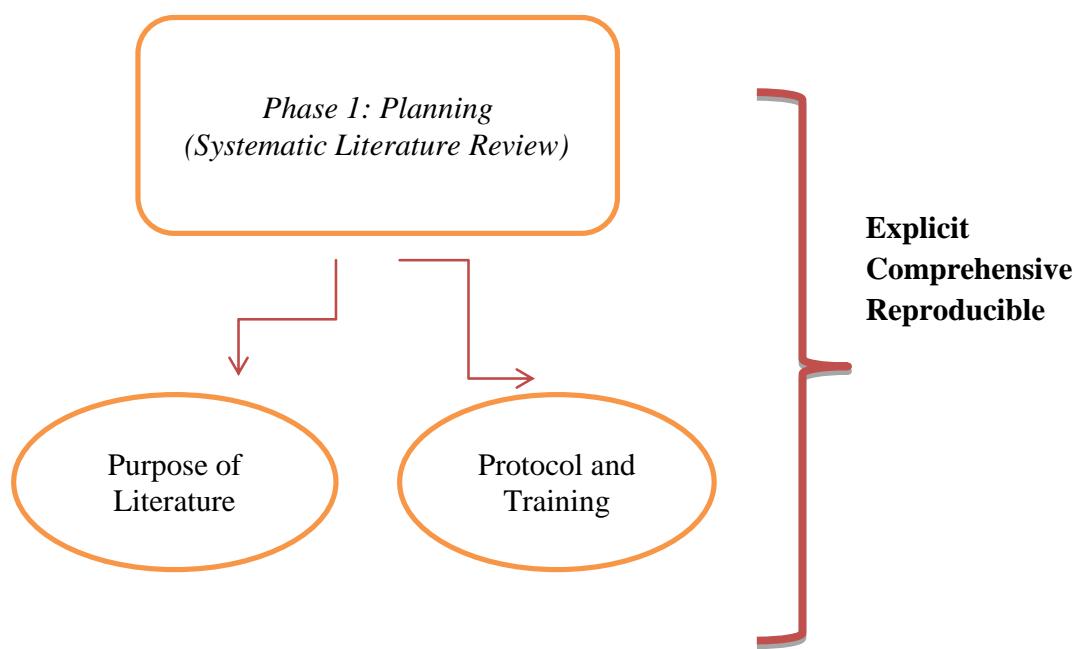
1. Is the type of research compatible with the planning stages under systematic literature review (SLR)?

2. What is the scope (details of metaphors) of research that requires analysis in previous related studies in discussing metaphors in academic writing?
3. What are the identified ideas of metaphor creation in each of these research discussions?
4. What is the strength and weaknesses of each of the previous studies selected?

## METHODOLOGY

This research adopts the SLR method proposed by Fink (2005). Previous studies selected were analysed with the same method, and particular emphasis was given on the planning stage. The present study examines the extent of previous studies in conducting research related to the production of metaphors in academic writing based on the keywords filtering, ‘Metaphors in Writing’. A total of 200 articles were filtered using these keywords. Subsequently, the scope of the search was devoted to the keywords ‘Range of

Metaphors in Formal Writing’, and a total of 100 articles have been filtered through the study of metaphor variations in formal writing. The remaining articles were filtered with keywords ‘Metaphors in Writing among Students’, and 50 articles were listed. To further strengthen the filtering process, the scope of the search was refined to articles with keywords ‘Metaphors in Academic Writing among Students’ and a total of 30 relevant articles were found. Out of these findings, only five articles fit the planning stage categorisation as defined in the SLR method, according to Fink's (2005) model. All five articles selected will be discussed in-depth in terms of metaphor production, especially in academic writing. They were filtered from internationally known scientific publishers, namely Springer Link, Research Gate, Oxford, Eric.edu, and ASSEHR. The content of each article is extracted based on the characterisation of the SLR planning stage, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Planning Stage Methodology Framework of Systematic Literature Review (Fink's Model: 2005)

## Mapping the Systematic Literature Review (SLR)

According to Fink (2005), the SLR method is an organised, well-defined, and comprehensive literature review system able to identify, evaluate and synthesise a study that has been developed and documented by a researcher. This review can be a pioneer for prospective researchers in conducting new studies based on aspects that have been used in previous studies. Before commencing the SLR method process, a researcher should review the adopted literature review approach in the study to evaluate its quality and make an analytical justification of the approach.

Fink (2005) outlined four key steps in SLR, namely planning, selection, extraction and finally, execution. In this study, this research only discusses the first stage, that is planning. In the planning process, the reviewer needs to clarify and identify the purpose of literature to provide a clearer understanding for the readers. The subsequent process is protocol and training where

the reviewer must be well-conversant and in agreement with the procedure to ensure consistency of the review. The proposed study procedure should be compatible with the study sample to make the data collection process more organised. The information obtained should be more explicit, comprehensive and applicable for implementation (Fink, 2005). The reviewer must also ensure that the collected data are in line with the main requirements and objectives of the study.

In this study, the analysis of past studies, which consist of internationally acclaimed papers, was conducted based on the mapping of SLR in describing more critical aspects of research. These studies have been found to discuss aspects of metaphors in various contexts such as metaphors in Science, English, Economics, Second Language Learning and general academic discourse. The selection of these articles was based on the research focus, which seeks to examine the theoretical and informational aspects of metaphors production. These articles were obtained from websites of Springer Link, Research Gate, Oxford, Eric.edu, and ASSEHR, as shown in Table 1:

**Table 1:** Descriptive Analysis of Metaphors Production through Keywords of ‘Metaphors in Academic Writing Among Students’

Research Category	Journal Variants	Analysis of Metaphors Production through Keywords of ‘Metaphors in Academic Writing Among Students’
Metaphors in Science-related texts	Springer Link	Active and Non-Active Metaphors
Metaphors in English language-related texts	ASSEHR	Metaphors based on Systematic Functional Linguistics
Metaphors in Economics related texts	Research Gate	Metaphors based on the Theory of Conceptual Metaphors
Metaphors in Second Language Learning texts	Oxford	Identification Metaphor Procedure

Metaphors in General Academic Discourse	ERIC	Metaphors based on Syntagmatic Structures
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## RESEARCH OUTCOME

As previously mentioned, the descriptive analysis of selected articles was based on the planning stage under the SLR method proposed by Fink (2005). The research outcome identifies four significant categories of metaphors production in academic writing. The categories are the production of metaphors in science, English language, economics, second language learning and academic discourse. The analysis was carried out systematically according to the set research questions. The summary for each of the selected articles are as follows:

### a.) Metaphors in Science Texts

The focus of research is on the planning stage in terms of structured training and teaching, as well as employment of systematic data collection methods. The study by Fredrikson and Felger (2018) examines in detail the effectiveness of using and producing metaphors by students from the fields of Science at Sweden University.

**Purpose of Literature:** In terms of objective formation, this study aims at examining the formulation of metaphors (explicitly) generated by students in composing Science-based text and evaluating the effectiveness of applying these metaphors in improving students' understanding of the subject more clearly and consistently (comprehensively).

### Protocol and Training:

A total of 93 students were selected to produce the science-based text-writing script based on the subject of the presentation. Out of the 93, a total of six science student-produced write-ups were selected, primarily from undergraduate students of

Physics and Geology, to look at the use and production of metaphors in their writing. The subject of interest is the types of metaphors generated, either active or inactive. Subsequently, informal interviews were also conducted to seek the students' opinions on the production and use of metaphors in their writings. In terms of metaphors production, the articles were analysed using conceptual metaphors (consistency in the implementation of research procedures) more systematically to assess how frequently metaphors were used in their writings. The findings found that four out of six selected students used metaphors more frequently in their writings. The use of metaphorical expressions can be clearly and comprehensively explored through the study of each subject in their writings. The remaining two students lack clarity when applying metaphors. However, they could provide a clear explanation during the interviews.

However, the overall analysis of the study entails several criticisms of importance. Firstly, the study only looks at the use of metaphors among Science stream students without comparing to the writings produced by students of other fields such as Language, Art, Music and Creative studies. In terms of metaphors construct, the study focuses only on the active or inactive metaphors. Generally, active metaphors are composed of understandable metaphors through the use of lexical items while latent or inactive metaphors refer to lexical items that are difficult to decipher. Some metaphors can be 'revived', despite being 'stone dead' (Richards, 1967: 101). Overall, this study, based on the production of metaphors in Science-based academic writings, found that majority of students produce variations of sentences containing indirect metaphorical constructs.

### b.) Metaphors in English Language Texts

The planning stage under SLR serves as the basis of the research, which involves a comprehensive analysis of English language texts by doctorate students. Rosa, Sofyan, & Tarigan (2018) conducted a study on the application of metaphors in scientific writing using the English language.

**Purpose of Literature:** The study aims to investigate delivery procedures and quality of text delivered in the form of dissertation proposals by students of the linguistic doctorate programme at the University of North Sumatra. This study, which is a form of descriptive qualitative research, analyses ten dissertation proposals in the English language written by students of the linguistics doctorate programme at the University of North Sumatra, Indonesia. The selected proposals of dissertations were analysed in a gradual yet systematic manner to ensure that the students were able to come up with a standard proposal according to the predetermined procedure.

**Protocol and Training:** The study adopts the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) proposed by Halliday (1994) to evaluate the quality of text by students. The application of metaphors based on SFL is related to the lexical density in the clauses generated.

The conducted study examines the compliance of specific English textual criteria in each of the texts submitted by the students in the dissertation proposal. The results showed that the majority of these students did not produce scientific texts complying with high-quality English writing criteria. The process of constructing clauses with metaphor properties is through nominalisation, which is the formation of a noun from a group of phrases or clauses (consistency in the execution of a research procedure). Thus, a quality written text is created with high lexical density, as well as the use of applicable clauses. Metaphors through the

nominalisation process are applied more efficiently and systematically in facilitating more robust writing. This study provides a good overview of the production of SFL-based metaphors through the process of nominalisation.

This study emphasises the English text, but without explaining the SFL method for easy reference for readers. The focus is inclined to discuss the methodology of producing metaphors based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as proposed by Halliday. Despite that the normalisation process can form metaphors in SFL, it would be clearer if the research deliberates Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Even though the normalisation process is perceived as a natural step in creating metaphors, the more appropriate method is to see through the Conceptual Metaphor Theory which has three different types of arrangements, namely; structural, ontological and orientation.

### c.) Metaphors in Economic Texts

The planning stage under SLR was investigated in the context of metaphors production in academic writing. Permayakova et al. (2016) studied the influence of academic writing competency in professional EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students.

**Purpose of the Literature:** The study analyses writing competencies of students in terms of knowledge such as familiarity of terminologies and understanding of specific concepts. The research adopts the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, to analyse the writing quality of EFL students, specifically from the usage of lexicons.

**Protocol and Traning:** Firstly, the researcher analyses the overall academic discourse to determine its purpose (the detailed procedure of implementation). Secondly, the researcher identifies lexicons produced through the Conceptual Metaphor Theory followed by the

Cognitive Metaphor Theory with alternative conceptualisations (how target concepts are interpreted in various ways, i.e. the scope of source domain) and primary conceptualisations (inclinations in alternative understandings, i.e. various concepts in the target domain) in economics-related texts by different students (comprehensiveness and applicability). A total of 22 Russian students with Economics backgrounds were involved in the study. The research compares lexicons produced in writings by students from two different fields. Results reveal that there are apparent differences in the writings produced by economics experts and non-economics experts. Professional students in Economics produced more lexicons than non-Economics students.

This study should examine students in the same field but different majors rather than focusing on two different fields; economics and non-economics. In terms of metaphor production, this study is based on Kövecses (2005) Conceptual Metaphor Analysis and five stages of metaphor analysis as proposed by Steen (2009) about two main domains, namely the target domain and source domain. Subsequent studies were conducted based on the metaphor mapping method based on the taxonomic model, as suggested by (Mussolf, 2006). This study focuses on the application of several formulation procedures as well as the conceptualisation of metaphors. The analysis performed on the selected text refers to several different approaches depending on the level of metaphor application by the students in the written text.

#### **d.) Metaphors in Second Language Learning Texts**

This section deliberates on writings produced by students of diverse nationalities related to second language learning to assess their level of language competency. The research findings were further analysed based on the planning stage under SLR. Littlemore et al (2014) conducted a study on the

use of metaphors in second language learning by students of different language proficiencies. Recent studies in linguistics have proven that metaphors exist everywhere regardless of the user's language proficiency or the type of language used.

**Purpose of the Literature:** This study aims to examine the use of metaphors in the writings of a diverse group of students. In meeting the objective, the study identifies distinctive characteristics of metaphors produced by students of various language competency levels in their writings and classifying them according to the stages in CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference and Language), from level A2 to C2.

**Protocol and Training:** A total of 200 essays produced by Greek and German students using English as a second language were selected in this study. The study uses the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) to identify the students' use of metaphors from different levels of proficiency. Results reveal that the frequency of metaphor application gradually increased from level A2 to level C2. In contrast, students in grades A2 to B2 produced a lot of simple metaphors compared to students from levels B2 to C2, which produced a higher number and more complex metaphorical expressions (clear and comprehensive) substantially. The levels of CEFR writing introduced by the European Union serve as a good foundation in aiding researchers to assess students' use of metaphors based on their level of language competence (applicability).

However, in terms of criticism, this study did not standardise the same type of writing theme in evaluating the students' quality of writing, but they were given a choice to write on themes of politics, economics, government, and social relations. In terms of metaphor production, this study adopts the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) as suggested by the Pragglejaz

Group (2007) and MIPVU model introduced by Steen et al (2010), which states that similes are part of the production of metaphors. The evaluation of metaphor formation by students through both models, by Pragglejaz and Steen, is perceived as a broad intellectual exercise and not focused.

The study formulates the perspective of examining the conceptualisation of ideas evident in a textual discourse delivered in different situations. Additionally, it looks at the effectiveness of the text in proving metaphorical ideas through intricate lexical identification.

#### e.) Metaphors in Academic Writing Discourse

This section analyses the planning stage under SLR through lexical data extraction from previous literature. Zheng and Song (2010) studied the production of metaphors in academic discourse.

**Purpose of the Literature:** This study attempts to prove that metaphor formation is based on the notion that metaphor is an intricate linguistic tool in broadening while encompassing the entire knowledge of certainty or uncertainty of producing clear and comprehensive lexicons. The focus of this study is on the students' language processing and communication strategies, especially in learning a language through the production of different metaphors. In this study, three previous studies related were selected to determine the effectiveness of metaphorical analysis.

**Protocol and Training:** This paper categorises previous studies which are divided into three central studies—first, the study of metaphor in an interaction between students and institutions; second, the metaphor analysis of teachers' perceptions in teaching; and third, metaphor analysis of students' learning. The metaphor analysis of student-institution interaction clearly

shows that a conducive learning environment provides a fresh perspective for students in producing a beautiful (explicit) lexical diversity. The second study deliberates on the metaphor analysis of teachers' perceptions in teaching, whereas the third study discusses metaphors in student learning. Results reveal the production of three metaphors: i) Students as products, ii.) Students as customers and iii.) Students as workers. Based on the three areas of study, the researcher concludes that in the field of cognitive linguistics, metaphors are not only considered beauty in language but also function as cognitive tools that include the use of language in everyday life (applicability). Languages and ideas co-operate in the production of new metaphors, based on a novel, abstract and more detailed concepts.

From a critical point of view, this study uses three types of discourse metaphor analysis in each of these studies. Each discourse text forms a common type of metaphor with specific metaphorical lexical items. In terms of metaphor production, this study looks at the metaphors formed from the words, 'student' and 'teacher', in different contexts and situations. This statement is in line with Shu's (2000) opinion which proves that metaphoric classification is based on a syntagmatic structure classified according to noun, verb, adjective, adverb, and preposition.

#### CONCLUSION

Overall, previous studies discussed clearly show that each of the selected studies represents clear and comprehensive purposes. It also signifies the implementation of systematic review procedures designed according to the desired intent and focus of the research. The results of the study contribute to ideas that could be used by prospective researchers in analysing to other studies in exploring the idea of metaphorical production in academic writing based on the planning stage as defined by Fink' (2005) systematic literature review model.

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