

Theoretical Foundation for Studying the Relationship between Metaphors and Education

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Abstract

There have only been a few studies done on issues about metaphors and educational activities, though metaphors have become a prominent focus in philosophy of language and linguistic studies during the past 30 years, and many educators have tried to develop some instructional program by using metaphors as a way of transmitting concepts and ideas. The purpose of this paper is to try to establish the theoretical foundation for studying the relationship between metaphors and educational activities. Among many theories of metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson's theory provides an adequate interpretation of the construction of human concepts and the human cognitive model with an experiential base. Their theory also provides a better explanation on language usage in educational function than other theories.

After exploring Lakoff and Johnson's theory in detail, the author discusses some studies done on metaphors and educational activities. Two aspects are discussed. One is an analysis of the concept of "education" in metaphorical statements which has caused some concern with educational philosophers. The other is the usage of metaphorical statements that can be constructed in order to promote learning results. We find that both aspects have not touched on the important problems of the relationship between using metaphors in educational situations and its impact on both teachers and students.

Key Words: metaphor, philosophy of language, source domain, target domain, mapping