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On the production of metaphors and metonymies by Jordanian EFL learners: acquisition and implications

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Abstract

This study explores the ability of Jordanian learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) to produce English metaphorical and metonymical expressions, using a completion task. It also examines whether the use of conceptual and linguistic knowledge of the participants' first language, i.e. Jordanian Arabic (JA) would facilitate the production task. The study adopts a contrastive model to compare and contrast figurative devices in English and JA, consisting of six types that vary in relation to the conceptual bases and linguistic expressions involved. The results reveal that even though the participants' scores were poor, the participants exhibited a general capacity to produce metaphorical/metonymical expressions that are similar in meaning to the ones required on the test, utilizing their L1 conceptual and linguistic knowledge. It was suggested that three important factors need to be satisfied to enable EFL learners to produce English figurative devices correctly, i.e. knowledge of the conceptual bases involved, a good command of English collocational knowledge and familiarity with the concept of partial synonymy, and continuous exposure to the figurative expressions in real-life English. Based on these results, the study proposes some pedagogical implications that may assist EFL learners to familiarize themselves with metaphorical/metonymical expressions in English and it concludes with recommendations for further research.

Key words

cognitive semantics, metaphor, metonymy, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, second language acquisition

Introduction

Metaphor is an inevitable aspect of our lives and a fact we cannot live without (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003).¹ It is so integrated into our everyday lives – in the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day – to the point where we usually produce it without even realizing it (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 4). With the publication of *Metaphors We Live By* by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), another perspective in metaphor production and processing has started to take shape. Many researchers (Emanatian, 1995; Yu, 1995; 2015; Boers, 2000; 2003;

Deignan, 2003; Charteris-Black, 2001, 2002; Ansah, 2010; Kövecses, 2002; 2005; 2010; Radić-Bojanić, 2013; Zibin, 2016; among others) examined metaphor closely by investigating and comparing conceptual metaphors across cultures. Due to their prevalence in day-to-day conversation, mastery of metaphor becomes an important requirement, especially for EFL learners (Radić-Bojanić, 2013). Several studies have shown that familiarity with metaphor in an L2 context is a substantial complication for L2 learners (Littlemore and Low, 2006; Zibin and Hamdan, 2014; Zibin, 2016). Due to the fact that EFL learners lack native speakers' competence, they are unable to process metaphorical expressions in a way

¹ I refer to the second edition of *Metaphors We Live By* by Lakoff and Johnson (2003).

similar to that of native speakers (Littlemore and Low, 2006). Encountering L2 metaphorical expressions on a daily basis, whether in class or through reading, and decoding them are viewed as one of the most effective ways to enhance metaphorical processing. Even though the ability to comprehend metaphorical expressions in context is vitally important in the acquisition of L2 metaphorical expressions, a true indicator of success would be the production of L2 metaphorical expressions spontaneously in daily speech (Littlemore and Low, 2006). Thus, production of metaphorical expression is a clear sign of EFL learners' mastery of metaphorical competence. Following this line of thought, this study aims to investigate the ability of Jordanian EFL learners to produce figurative devices, i.e. metaphors and metonymies, in English. Ultimately, the current study examines the effect of L1 conceptual AND linguistic knowledge of figurative language on its processing in L2.

1. Background

1.1 Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (henceforth CMT), also referred to as Cognitive Metaphor Theory, was first introduced in 1980 by Lakoff and Johnson, who deviated from the traditional view of metaphor, in which it was considered a rhetorical device used only in literary texts. The theory, fundamentally, proposes that metaphor can be found at the level of cognition. According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), metaphors are viewed as a cognitive process, where a link between two conceptual domains, i.e. the source and target domains, is established via partial mappings, namely, systematic correspondences (Lakoff, 1993, p. 1). For instance, LIFE can be perceived as a GAMBLING GAME where GAMBLING GAME is the source domain and LIFE is the target domain. However, since these conceptual metaphors exist on an abstract level, they can be detected via examining metaphorical expressions that reflect them. For instance, linguistic realizations of the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A GAMBLING GAME are the following (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 51):

- I'll *take my chances*.
- I've *got an ace up my sleeve*.
- If you *play your cards right*, you can do it.

Target domains are metaphorically structured conceptual domains that are seen to be grounded in language and culture; therefore, they influence people's thinking (Cameron and Deignan, 2006, p. 672). Normally, words in source domains convey unmarked senses, whilst those in target domains carry less usual or marked senses (Charteris-Black, 2002). Following this line of inquiry, in metaphor processing some features are borrowed from source domains and mapped onto target domains to facilitate the comprehension of the latter. This study adopts the tenets of CMT and applies them to metaphor processing and production.

Another important conceptual device that has been discussed by several scholars (e.g. Papafragou, 1996, p. 169; Gibbs, 1994, p. 62; Kövecses, 2002, p. 145 among others) is metonymy. Deignan (2005, p. 55) indicates that metonymy is viewed as an "indirect reference, or reference shift, in which a linguistic sign refers not [only] to its default concept A, but to another concept B, within a single cognitive domain". For instance, in the sentence "we need a new glove to play third base" *new glove* refers to someone who would play third base in a baseball game (Gibbs, 1994, p. 62). The following section provides an overview of previous studies on metaphor.

1.2 Previous studies on metaphor

Research that tackles the acquisition of metaphorical expressions by EFL/ESL learners has started to gain momentum in the last couple of decades (Kövecses and Szabó, 1996, Littlemore and Low, 2006; Cameron and Deignan, 2006; Radić-Bojanić, 2013; Zibin, 2016 among others). In one of the most relevant studies of the acquisition of metaphors by EFL learners, Charteris-Black (2002) investigated figurative expressions in English and Malay in terms of the similarities and differences between the two languages. The study also attempted to anticipate the difficulties encountered by Malay EFL learners (36 intermediate-level students) with regard to figurative expressions. Two tests were used to measure students'

ability to comprehend and produce figurative units in English. Through analysing metaphorical and metonymical expressions and conceptual bases in English and Malay, Charteris-Black developed a model consisting of six types of figurative units, based on an earlier model designed by Deignan et al. (1997). These six types of figurative units outlined by Charteris-Black (2002, p. 114) were proposed depending on whether there is a correspondence between the linguistic expression and the conceptual basis in the two languages, and whether the linguistic expressions and conceptual bases exhibit culture-specific (i.e. opaque) or universal (i.e. transparent) characteristics. Even though this model was based on the similarities and differences between English and Malay, analysis of conceptual bases and linguistic expressions in English and Arabic reveals that the model suggested by Charteris-Black (2002) is applicable to English and Arabic and, potentially, cross-linguistically. Thus, this model was adopted to compare and contrast conceptual bases and linguistic expressions in English and Arabic (see section 2.2). Below is a description of Charteris-Black's (2002, p. 115–119) model that is adopted in the study reported here:

Type one: Equivalent conceptual basis and equivalent linguistic form in English and Malay.

Type two: Equivalent conceptual basis and similar linguistic form in English and Malay.

Type three: Completely different conceptual basis but similar linguistic forms in English and Malay.

Type four: Similar conceptual basis in English and Malay but completely different linguistic or surface forms.

Type five: Completely different conceptual bases and completely different linguistic expressions in English and JA. Nonetheless, the metaphorical expressions may be transparent because they are readily accessible on the basis of knowledge that is culturally neutral.

Type six: Completely different conceptual bases and completely different linguistic expressions in English and JA. Moreover, the metaphorical expressions are opaque in so far as the conceptual basis reflects the encoding of a culture-specific meaning.

The results of Charteris-Black's study show that students faced difficulties with certain types of linguistic expression that differed from Malay in terms of conceptual and cultural basis, namely, type 3 and type 6. It was recommended that this result be confirmed by large-scale studies that include different languages, using similar methodology (cf. Zibin, 2016). The study reported here is driven by this suggestion.

Shokouhi and Isazadeh (2009) explored the means by which Iranian EFL learners can acquire and use conceptual and image metaphors in English. The 60 junior students who participated in the study were chosen based on their high proficiency level in English. After 10 sessions of instruction, students were acquainted with 40 metaphors of both types, namely conceptual and image metaphors. The researchers used a 30-item completion test that was divided into two parts; *word-given* and *recognition* tests. The results demonstrated no significant difference in the rate of acquiring the two types. However, based on the results, the two researchers reported that cultural awareness of the figurative expressions of the target language may contribute considerably to the development of communicative competence, in addition to other language skills.

In a recent study, Zibin (2016) investigated Jordanian EFL learners' ability to comprehend figurative language in English and examined the influence of their L1 (i.e. Jordanian Arabic) conceptual and linguistic knowledge on their comprehension of these expressions.²

² Both Zibin (2016) and the current study used the same metaphorical and metonymical expressions and tested the same participants (see section 2.1). The participants' receptive knowledge of the metaphorical/metonymical expressions was measured using a multiple-choice test whose results are reported in Zibin (2016), whereas their production knowledge of these expressions was tested using a completion test, which is reported in the current study. The same metaphorical/metonymical expressions were used in both the multiple-choice and the completion tests in order to compare the participants' results on both tests and measure their abilities to comprehend and produce English metaphorical/metonymical expressions. A comparison between the participants' results on the multiple-choice test

Zibin adopted the contrastive model developed by Charteris-Black (2002), the one also used in the current study. The model consists of six types of figurative units to compare metaphors and metonymies in both English and Arabic. Using a multiple-choice test, the results reveal that the participants' receptive knowledge of figurative language is constrained by the type in question. For instance, type 6 and 3 were the most difficult for participants to recognize. The linguistic manifestations of the conceptual bases in type 3 presented a challenge to the participants, since the conceptual bases are different in both languages. Cultural differences in type 6 metaphors and metonymies yielded a significant number of errors in the test. Zibin concluded that the participants exhibited general conceptualizing capacity of English figurative devices, hinting at the potential universality of CMT. A more detailed discussion of the participants' results on both the multiple-choice test reported in Zibin (2016) and the participants' results on the current study is provided in section 3.1.

Reviewing the relevant literature indicates that the acquisition of figurative devices, i.e. metaphors and metonymies by Arabic-speaking EFL learners, especially the ability to produce these devices in L2, has received little attention if any. Thus, this study aims to bridge this gap through providing answers to the following questions:

- 1) To what extent do Jordanian EFL learners have the ability to produce figurative devices, i.e. metaphors and metonymies, in English?
- 2) Does L1 figurative knowledge have an impact on the participants' production of English metaphorical and metonymical expressions?

2. Methodology

2.1 The participants

One hundred advanced learners studying English Language and Literature at the University of Jordan took part in the current study. Their mean age was 22 years. All were native speakers of Jordanian Arabic (henceforth JA), who had a working knowledge of Modern Standard

Arabic (henceforth MSA). I chose the participants on the basis of my belief that at this age and proficiency level in English, they would have the metalanguage required for the completion test. Students of low or intermediate level of proficiency may not be suitable for this study (cf. Deignan et al., 1997, p. 358; Zibin, 2016, p. 3). At the time of data collection (i.e. the second term of the academic year 2012/2013), the participants were at the final stage of their BA in English Language and Literature, having completed 80 to 90 credit hours of advanced English courses, e.g. poetry, drama, Shakespeare, linguistics and syntax.

2.2 Data collection

I referred to *McGraw-Hill's American Idioms Dictionary* (2007) to extract metaphors and metonymies in English, and to *A Comprehensive Dictionary of English Idioms: English-Arabic* (1997) to collect these devices in Arabic. The figurative units utilized in this study are the same ones used by Zibin (2016), in which she examined the participants' ability to recognize metaphors and metonymies in L2 (see Appendix 1). In order to ensure the validity of the results, I checked the frequency of the English figurative units in *The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)* to ensure that they are used in contemporary speech. With regard to the Arabic metaphors and metonymies, I conducted a pilot study in which 12 native speakers of JA were asked to write the meaning of the Arabic metaphorical and metonymical expressions. The final version of the test only included those metaphors and metonymies that received similar answers from 80% and above of the JA informants. Finally, the collected metaphors and metonymies were examined thoroughly according to the similarity and the difference between the conceptual bases and linguistic expressions in both English and JA (see Zibin, 2016). This analysis revealed that the contrastive model proposed by Charteris-Black (2002) to compare and contrast figurative units in English and Malay is applicable to English and Arabic, suggesting that this model could be applicable cross-linguistically.

and the completion test is provided in section 3.1.

2.3 The instrument

A 24-item cued completion test containing contexts taken, with minor modifications, from *The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)* was administered in order to test the participants' ability to produce metaphors and metonymies in English (see Appendix 2). The participants were given three clues that may assist them in providing correct answers. The first clue gives the participants an idea about the meaning of the expression they should use – the *italicized* one. The second clue provides the participants with one word (between brackets) among the others they should use in their answer. The third clue indicates the number of words they should use in their answer (see Appendix 2). In general, it was expected that if the participants' accessed their L1 conceptual knowledge in producing L2 metaphorical/metonymical expressions, then they would find those types that have equivalent or similar conceptual bases in the two languages, i.e. type 1, 2 and 4, easier than those which have different conceptual bases in the two languages, i.e. type 3, 5 and 6. The participants would even find those types that have a shared equivalent or similar linguistic expression, in addition to the common conceptual basis, i.e. type 1 and 2, much easier. Furthermore, it was anticipated that the linguistic expressions that are based on culturally neutral knowledge, i.e. type 5, would be easier than those whose conceptual bases are interpreted with reference to cultural-specific knowledge, i.e. type 6 (cf. Charteris-Black, 2002, p. 120; Zibin, 2016). The participants' answers were deemed correct or accurate if they were able to provide all the items of the metaphorical/metonymical expressions correctly, i.e. *iron hand/fist*, *madly in love*, etc. However, if the participants provided a metaphorical/metonymical expression that has the same meaning as the one required in good English, it was regarded as correct, e.g. *strong hand* and *firm grasp* were regarded as correct when provided instead of *iron hand/fist*, since these metaphorical expressions represent the conceptual metaphor CONTROL IS HOLDING SOMETHING IN THE HAND.

2.4 Data analysis

Since the same group of participants was tested on several groups of stimuli (6

types of figurative devices), the observations made in this study were not independent; thus, a one-way ANOVA with repeated measures was conducted in order to test whether the differences between the participants' answers on the six types of figurative devices were statistically significant (reported in Table 2). If the overall result of the repeated measures ANOVA is statistically significant, this test also pinpoints where the differences between the participants' answers on the six types of figurative devices were exactly found (reported in Table 3). These results are presented and discussed in the following section.

3. Results and discussion

Table 1 below gives a summary of percentages, means and standard deviations of accurate responses on the six types of figurative units on the completion test:

Type	% of accurate responses	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	47	1.89	1.57
2	23	0.91	1.30
3	11	0.43	0.97
4	23	0.90	1.20
5	18	0.71	1.09
6	10	0.38	0.96
Average	22	0.87	1.30

Table 1: Accurate responses on the six types of figurative units on the test

Table 1 shows differences in the percentages, means and standard deviations of accurate responses on each of the six types of figurative units. However, it may be seen that the participants' performance on the test was generally poor (22%). Table 2 below reports the results of the one-way ANOVA with repeated measures, followed by Table 3 which shows the results of paired comparison or Post Hoc, indicating where the differences between the participants' answers were on the six types of figurative units.³

³ SS stands for Sum of Squares and MS stands for Mean Square.

	Type III SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Type of fig. unit	9.080	5	1.816	11.342	.000
Error	79.253	495	0.160		

Table 2: ANOVA test of within-subjects effects (repeated measures)

Type	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	–					
2	.240*	–				
3	.360*	.120	–			
4	.240*	.000	– .120	–		
5	.290*	.050	– .070	.050	–	
6	.370*	.130	.010	.130	.080	–

**P* value at <0.05

Table 3: Pairwise comparisons (Post Hoc)

A careful study of Table 2 and 3 warrants two remarks. Firstly, there were statistically significant differences between the six types of figurative units on the completion test ($P < 0.05$). This result suggests that the differences between the participants' answers on the six types of figurative devices were statistically significant. Secondly, Table 3 demonstrates that there were two levels of difficulty that may be arranged, starting from the least difficult to the most difficult:

1. Type 1 (47%)
2. Type 2 (23%), type 4 (23%), Type 5 (18%), Type 3 (11%), Type 6 (10%)

Despite the participants' poor performance on the completion test in general (22%), the participants' answers on type 1 were higher than all the other types. The unquestionable dominance of type 1 over the other types is apparent when comparing the scores obtained by the participants on the test. For instance, Table 3 clearly shows that there were statistically significant differences on the test between type 1 (47%), on the one hand, and type 2 (23%), type 3 (11%), type 4 (23%), type 5 (18%) and type 6 (10%), on the other. This may be attributed to the fact that the participants activated both their conceptual and linguistic knowledge

of L1 in producing type 1 figurative expressions, since they are equivalent in both English and Arabic. Thus, the similarity between the two languages may have played a positive role in the participants' correct responses on the test (cf. Charteris-Black, 2002, p. 122). Deignan et al. (1997, p. 354) reported that participants found little difficulty in translating metaphors that have the same conceptual bases and linguistic expressions in English and Polish. A similar trend was also noticed by Boers (2000, p. 563); he explained that the correspondence of the metaphors in both English and students' L1 (French or Dutch) facilitated their comprehension of them. Hence, it can be suggested that when the two languages share the same conceptual basis and figurative expression, the participants can access L1 conceptual and linguistic knowledge to process and produce L2 figurative expressions.

Further presentation and discussion of the participants' scores on each test item of the six types of figurative units on the test are provided in the remainder of this section. Table 4 below reports the percentage of correct responses on each test item of type 1.

Figurative expression	% of correct responses
Iron fist/hand	56
Madly in love	61
Blood boil	39
Put your finger on	33
Average	47

Table 4: Type 1: Correct responses on each test item on the test

Table 4 demonstrates that even though the participants' scores on this type were the highest compared to the other types, their performance is still poor (47%). The highest score was 61% for *madly in love*, whereas the lowest was 33% for *put your finger on*. Examples of the participants' faulty answers on the test are shown below:

- **Iron handle* instead of *iron hand/fist* (5%)⁴
- **Head boil* instead of *blood boil* (14%)

⁴ The percentage of participants who made the reported error.

- c. **Locate your finger on* instead of *put your finger on* (10%)
- d. **Madly with each other* instead of *madly in love* (11%)

It is clear that some of the participants had no trouble understanding the meaning that should be provided, implying that they do not lack the necessary skills to produce metaphors in general. However, they were unable to produce the needed expression. The conceptual mappings between the source domain PHYSICALLY HOLDING SOMETHING IN THE HAND and the target domain CONTROL exist in Arabic, which explains why 47% of the participants were able to provide the correct answer. However, a careful examination of Table 4 shows that 56% of the participants were able to produce the figurative expression *iron fist/hand* correctly, while 44% of the participants were unable to. In example (a), 5% of the participants produced *iron handle*. It can be suggested that these participants produced this metaphor since *hand/fist/handle* have the same translation in Arabic *qabḍah*. However, the participants were not aware of the subtle nuances of meaning between these synonyms in English, i.e. one can say *iron hand/fist*, but not *iron handle*. In addition, 17% of the participants who produced wrong answers wrote only the word that was provided for them on the test. For instance, I provided the word *iron* so that the participant should only produce *fist or hand*. Yet, 17% of the participants wrote *iron* only, so practically they did not produce anything. Hence, they lost a mark. Moreover, 23% of the participants either left the space provided for the answer blank or wrote something totally wrong. In addition, 4% of the participants wrote *iron weapons*. It is possible that their answer was affected by the context provided for them on the test, i.e. Assad talking about the necessity of fighting terrorists in Syria.

While 61% of the participants produced *madly in love* correctly, 39% were unable to produce it. Specifically, 11% of them wrote *madly with each other* (a similar expression to the JA metaphorical expression *madʒnu:n fi:ha*, lit. mad in her 'he is mad about her'), rather than *madly in love*. It is clear that the participants' answer was motivated by L1 conceptual knowledge and more broadly by the

potentially cross-linguistic conceptual metaphor LOVE IS MADNESS, which exists in Arabic. It should be noted that the answer *mad about each other* was deemed correct, since it represents the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS MADNESS.

Table 4 shows that 39% of the participants were able to produce *blood boil*, while 61% were unable to. Specifically, 14% of those who provided faulty answers wrote *head boil*, rather than *blood boil*. One may argue that L1 may have influenced the participants' answers (cf. Zibin & Altakhaineh, 2016). It is possible that the participants' answers were affected by the JA metaphorical expression *ʔinharaʔ ra:sʕu*, lit. his head burned 'he is very angry'. In addition, 6% wrote *heart boil*. It is obvious that their answer may have been affected by the JA metaphorical expression *ʔalby byeyly ʕale:h*, lit. my heart is boiling for him 'I'm very worried and anxious'. In addition, 33% of the participants were able to produce *put your finger on*, while 77% produced faulty answers. 10% wrote *locate your finger on*, suggesting that the conceptual mappings between PHYSICALLY TOUCHING SOMETHING and LOCATING/IDENTIFYING may exist in their minds. However, they lacked the linguistic knowledge necessary to express the conceptual metaphor in English. It can be suggested that the participants may have translated the verb *ḥaddada*, lit. locate, directly from JA. Hence, they produced the wrong answer. Their answer also suggests that they are unaware of the context in which the verb *locate* appears. A pattern can be observed here, namely, when the conceptual metaphor exists in both the source language and target language, and the participants lack the linguistic knowledge necessary to reflect the conceptual metaphor, they resort to their linguistic knowledge of L1.

Moreover, 16% of the participants wrote *point your finger*, rather than *put your finger on*. Their answer may indicate that they have simply chosen one of the verbs that usually accompany the word *finger*; they may have chosen a verb they are familiar with rather than writing something they are not sure about. This strategy is followed by the participants, who avoid learning several words that have a similar meaning, because they believe that learning one synonym is enough. This may suggest that the

participants may not be aware that synonymy is only partial and not all synonyms are interchangeable in context. In general, the participants' answers may indicate that they may have the necessary skills to produce metaphors; they only need more instruction about how such skills can be put to use appropriately, especially given the fact that their instruction about metaphors has not made clear the idea that they are not mere rhetoric devices employed only by poets and writers. Despite the fact that the participants have been exposed to metaphorical expressions in English, since they are all English majors who take courses such as poetry and Shakespeare, they may not have been familiarized with the idea that metaphors exist at the level of thinking, where conceptual mappings between two domains are established. In addition, the majority of metaphorical expressions they are exposed to are innovative and novel metaphorical expressions, in the sense that conceptual mappings are established between two domains where there is not much similarity, e.g. LIFE IS WINTER and DEATH IS SPRING rather than LIFE IS SPRING and DEATH IS WINTER as depicted by the poet Gibran (cited in Palola, 2009, p. 29). These novel metaphorical expressions may have influenced the way the participants conceive of metaphoricality. Put differently, L2 teachers, possibly, have not explained to the students that metaphors are devices used in every-day conversations by everyone. Thus, more attention should be paid to this area (see section 4). Having discussed the participants' results on type 1, I move on to discuss their results on type 2. Table 5 below presents the participants' correct responses on type 2.

Figurative expression	% of correct responses
My heart skipped a beat	30
Fight tooth and nail	22
Fan the flames	17
At a snail's pace	22
Average	23

Table 5: Type 2: Correct responses on each test item on the test

A thorough examination of Table 5 shows that participants' scores on the test (23%) were significantly low. Surprisingly, despite the fact that in this type,

conceptual bases are the same and the linguistic expressions are similar in both English and JA, many participants could not provide the correct answer. One may argue that the participants faced some obstacles in producing the English metaphorical expressions because of the non-correspondence of the linguistic expressions in the two languages. The participants had access to the conceptual metaphors, since they exist in both English and Arabic; however, they had difficulties with producing the correct figurative expression. In addition, the high percentage of errors was probably due to the whole-item-correct requirement, that is, the participants were asked to provide all the elements of the metaphors/metonymies correctly. Table 5 demonstrates that 30% of the participants produced *my heart skipped a beat* correctly, indicating that they were able to establish mappings between the source domain THE MATERIAL STATE OF A VITAL ORGAN and the target domain THE STATE OF THE FEELINGS. Nevertheless, 70% produced wrong answers. Furthermore, 8% of the participants wrote *my heart skipped down*, rather than *my heart skipped a beat*. One may argue that the participants' answer was affected by the JA metaphorical expression *ʔalby wiʔiʃ* or *habaʔ* lit. my heart dropped down 'I was startled'. Another 11% and 9% wrote *my fear skipped* or *skipping* and *skipped*, respectively. It is possible that their answers were influenced by the clues provided on the test. It should be noted that I took time before the administration of the test to explain the question and the clues explicitly to the participants. However, it may be the case that some of the participants did not understand the question.

Here, I would argue that the reason why the participants encountered considerable difficulty in providing the correct figurative expression rests on their lack of vocabulary or collocational knowledge in English. For instance, Table 5 shows that 17% of the participants produced the figurative expression *fan the flames*, whereas 83% of the participants produced erroneous responses. Additionally, 12% wrote *rise the flames*, 8% *make more flames*, 6% *flames more*, 9% *put woods to flames* instead of *fan the flames*. The answers provided by the participants may indicate that they understood the meaning

that should be provided, i.e. *making a bad situation worse by adding something to it*. However, they lacked the necessary collocational knowledge in English. Even though I provided the participants with three clues to help them complete the test, many of the participants either did not produce anything or produced faulty answers. I believe that had it not been for these clues, the number of incorrect to correct answers would have been greater. Moving on to type 3, Table 6 below shows the percentage of correct responses on each test item of type 3.

Figurative expression	% of correct responses
Break a leg	12
In the black	7
Pulling my leg	10
Cold feet	14
Average	11

Table 6: Type 3: Correct responses on each test item on the test

Table 6 shows that the participants produced a remarkably low percentage of correct answers (11%). The figures displayed in Table 6 repeated the general trend wherein incorrect answers predominated over correct ones. One may argue that the non-correspondence of conceptual bases between English and JA contributed to the participants' wrong answers on the test. Arabic does not establish the same conceptual mappings between the source and target domains that exist in English. In fact, in certain cases, the mappings are the exact opposite. For instance, the English expression *cold feet* (14%) is based on the conceptual metaphor FEAR IS FEELING COLD, whereas the JA expression, *ḥa:ṭit' ridʒleih bmay ba:rdih* lit. he put his feet in cold water 'he is relaxed' is based on the conceptual metaphor FEELING COLD IS BEING RELAXED. While 14% of the participants produced the metaphorical expression *cold feet* correctly, 86% failed to do so. In addition, 15% and 8% wrote *scared feet* and *uncertain feet*, respectively. Hence, so far it seems that when two languages share the same conceptual bases, the production of metaphorical/metonymical expressions that represent these conceptual bases is

easier than having completely different conceptual bases.

Table 6 clearly shows only 10% of the participants were able to produce *pulling my leg* correctly, while 90% produced wrong answers. One possible explanation for the participants' erroneous responses could be due to the low frequency of some metaphorical/metonymical expressions of this type. For instance, *pulling my leg* occurs only 9 times every 100 million words in the COCA. Only 10% of the participants were able to produce this item correctly. However, some of the metaphorical/metonymical expressions of this type are more frequent. For example, *cold feet* occurs 47 times every 100 million words in the COCA, yet only 14% of the participants were able to produce it on the test. This may indicate that frequency is not the only factor governing EFL learners' familiarity with a certain metaphorical expression (cf. Fareh and Bin Moussa, 2007). If the participants are not primed to make a connection between the source and target domains, they may still find the metaphorical expressions representing that conceptual metaphor difficult to produce even if it is frequent (see section 4). This may suggest that there are three important factors that need to be satisfied to enable EFL learners to produce the English metaphorical/metonymical expressions correctly, namely, knowledge of the conceptual bases of the figurative device involved, a good command of English collocational knowledge and familiarity with the concept of partial synonymy, and continuous exposure to the metaphorical/metonymical expressions in real-life English.

Next, I move on to discuss the participants' results on type 4. Table 7 below illustrates the percentage of correct responses on each test item of type 4.

Figurative expression	% of correct responses
Gold digger	16
Add insult to injury	23
The cold shoulder	24
Head over heels	27
Average	23

Table 7: Type 4: Correct responses on each test item on the test

Table 7 clearly shows that the highest score was 27% for *head over heels*, whereas the lowest score was 16% for *gold digger*. Despite the fact that the conceptual bases are equivalent in both languages in this type, 77% of the participants were not able to provide the correct answers. The percentage of correct answers (23%) on this type was higher than that on type 3 (11%), but still there were no statistically significant differences. According to Table 7, 84% of the participants were unable to produce *gold digger* on the test. One participant provided a close answer to it, namely *gold seeker* instead of *gold digger*. This response may suggest, again, that lack of collocational knowledge played a big role in the participants' erroneous answers (cf. Bahumaid, 2006).

Table 8 below displays the percentage of correct responses on each test item of type 5.

Figurative expression	% of correct responses
Keep your head above water	11
In the fast lane	14
Keep his nose clean	15
Tip of the iceberg	31
Average	18

Table 8: Type 5: Correct responses on each test item on the test

Table 8 demonstrates that the participants' scores on the test were poor (18%). Despite the fact that type 5 deals with metaphorical/metonymical expressions that are culturally neutral, many of the participants were unable to produce them on the test. This is possibly because Arabic and English do not share the same conceptual bases. Table 8 shows that only 14% of the participants were able to produce *in the fast lane*, whereas 86% of the participants produced faulty answers. Moreover, 8% of the participants wrote *in the quick lane*. The participants' response may suggest that they were familiar with a synonym of one of the metaphorical expression components, i.e. *quick* more than *fast*. The same challenge with synonyms is also observed here, indicating that synonymy is quite problematic for Arabic-speaking EFL learners. Table 9 below displays the

percentage of correct responses on each test item of type 6.

Figurative expression	% of correct responses
Blue blood	9
Achilles' heel	8
Off the hook	13
White collar	8
Average	10

Table 9: Type 6: Correct responses on each test item on the test

Table 9 shows that only 10% of the participants were able to produce the correct answers of type 6 metaphorical/metonymical expressions. The fact that the figurative expressions of type 6 have completely different conceptual bases and linguistic expressions in English and JA may have contributed to the participants' poor performance. Furthermore, it may be argued that metaphorical/metonymical expressions of type 6 were difficult for the participants because they reflect culture-specific or marked knowledge that does not exist in JA (see Altakhaine & Zibin, 2014). This markedness may have contributed to the participants' wrong answers on the test. Eckman (1985, p. 3–4) predicted that more L2 marked areas will be difficult. For instance, only 8% of the participants were able to produce *white collar* on the completion test. This metonymical expression (i.e. COLOUR OF CLOTHES FOR STATUS) conveys culture-specific connotations associated with the colour of clothes, i.e. *white*, that do not exist in JA.

Additionally, Table 9 shows that only 9% and 8% of the participants were able to produce *blue blood* and *Achilles' heel*, respectively. *Blue blood* is based on the conceptual metonymy BLOOD FOR STATUS, manifesting a stand-for relationship which is characteristic of metonymy. This metonymical expression is traced back to ancient and medieval societies of Europe; it refers to upper class royalty whose superficial veins appeared blue through their fair skin as opposed to working class, who were mostly peasants with dark skin. The metaphorical expression *Achilles' heel* began to be used in English in the 19th century. According to the legend, Achilles' mother Thetis dipped him in the river Styx to make him

immortal, but the water did not reach his heel making it his only point of weakness; later he was killed by an arrow aimed at his heel. Even though the participants have encountered *Achilles' heel* in their studies at the University, 92% of the participants were still not able to provide it, suggesting that exposure is not enough for EFL learners to comprehend and produce the metaphorical/metonymical expression, the conceptual mappings (and in the case of metonymy explaining how the reference is based on contiguity i.e. closeness of association), or at least the historical and cultural background needed to be explained to the participants first (see section 4). Now that the participants' results on the completion test have been discussed, the next section compares the participants' results on both the multiple-choice test reported in Zibin (2016) and their results on the completion test reported in the current study.

3.1 Multiple-choice test vs. completion test

This comparison is done to determine whether there are differences between the participants' results in terms of their receptive and productive knowledge of the figurative units employed in the current study and that of Zibin (2016). Although the two tests, i.e. the multiple-choice and completion, were administered in one session, the completion test was carried out first. The aim of this procedure was to reduce the possibility of the participants remembering the figurative expressions and thus reducing the value of the results (cf. Hamdan, 1994, p. 111). On the basis of the participants' results on the multiple-choice and the completion tests, it became clear that the participants' overall performance on the multiple-choice test (71%) was much higher than their performance on the completion test (22%), regardless of the type of figurative unit involved. This result suggests that the participants' ability to recognize figurative units exceeds their ability to produce them even though they were given three clues to assist them in answering the completion task. Table 10 below presents the results of a t-test used to compare the correct responses on the six types of figurative units on the multiple-choice (MC) test and the completion (C) test:

Type	Test type	%	t	df	sig
1	MC	94	12.62	99	0.000
	C	47			
2	MC	85	15.90	99	0.000
	C	23			
3	MC	44	10.07	99	0.000
	C	11			
4	MC	81	18.80	99	0.000
	C	23			
5	MC	71	14.79	99	0.000
	C	18			
6	MC	52	13.68	99	0.000
	C	10			
Total	MC	71	22.09	99	0.000
	C	22			

Table 10: Comparison of correct responses on the six types of figurative units on multiple-choice and completion tests

Table 10 above shows that there were statistically significant differences ($P < 0.05$) between the participants' correct responses on the multiple-choice and the completion tests on each of the six types of figurative units. Similarly, in her study, Shehata (2008) found that Arabic-speaking EFL students' receptive knowledge of collocation was better than their productive knowledge. Hence, Shehata recommended that students need more practice in the production of collocations. She also indicated that students should be more exposed to English collocations in order to receive as much input as possible. However, as proposed earlier, exposure may not be enough (see *Achilles' heel*). Specifically, explaining how the mappings between the source and target domains are established or how the reference in metonymy is based on contiguity is necessary for the students to comprehend and produce metaphorical and metonymical expressions in English. The results of the two tests reveal that type 3 and 6 were the most difficult types on both tests due to the differences between the conceptual bases in English and Arabic. In addition, type 1 was considered to be the easiest type on both tests. Interestingly, even

though the same metaphorical/metonymical expressions were used in both tests, when the participants were asked to produce them, the overall percentage of correct answers was 22%. However, the percentage of correct answers on the multiple-choice test was 71%. The participants could not produce the metaphorical expressions, but when asked to recognize them on the comprehension test, their performance was remarkable. As far as the acquisition of L2 metaphorical/metonymical expressions is concerned, the participants' skills, i.e. receptive and productive, should be handled differently by L2 teachers. The production of metaphorical/metonymical expressions should receive more attention, or perhaps the receptive skills of the participants can be employed to enhance their productive skills. This takes us to the next section, where I suggest some pedagogical implications that may assist EFL learners in overcoming some of the difficulties that they may encounter in acquiring L2 metaphorical and metonymical expressions.

4. Pedagogical implications

With regard to types 1, 2 and 4, one may argue that the mere existence of the conceptual bases in the students' minds is insufficient for them to produce metaphors and metonymies. It is also not enough for them to learn the way conceptual metaphors and metonymies are expressed in the foreign language (see Kövecses and Szabó, 1996, p. 351). Saygin (2001) posited that in producing sentences in L2, EFL learners may be less confident about the appropriateness of the metaphorical usage in that language despite the fact that conceptually the metaphor exists in their native language. Therefore, as far as pedagogy is concerned, it is very beneficial to raise students' awareness of conceptual metaphors/metonymies in an explicit way in English before they can use them. This can be done by showing the students how each metaphorical/metonymical expression represents a conceptual pattern. L2 teachers need to explain how metaphor works and how mappings between two concepts are established based on similarity in certain aspects. In the case of metonymy, L2 teachers need to explain how reference to one entity using another is based on closeness of association. For instance, with regard to

PART FOR WHOLE metonymy, many parts can stand for the whole. Therefore, it is crucial to explain which features of the whole we want to emphasize (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 37). For instance in the sentence: *there are a lot of good heads in the university*. It is clear the *head* is chosen because intelligence is associated with the *head*; other parts of the body will not do the job (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 37). It would be helpful to encourage students to spell out the similarities between the concepts involved in the metaphor or metonymy so that they can see how the conceptual patterns are established. Moreover, writing this pattern on the board and listing the metaphorical/metonymical expressions that represent it can help the students make the connection between the abstract level (conceptual basis) and the surface level (linguistic expression). Once they comprehend how metaphor/metonymy is formed, their production will potentially become easier.

The next step is to ask the students to think of metaphorical/metonymical expressions in their mother tongue that can also be classified under one conceptual pattern and write them next to the English metaphorical/metonymical expressions on the board, so that they can see that even though the conceptual basis is the same, the metaphorical/metonymical expressions that represent it may not be the same in the source language and target language. If they are able to provide examples, then they can grasp the idea that some conceptual bases are shared in some languages. In addition, when it comes to the production of figurative expressions, more attention should be given to the linguistic expressions in the foreign language, especially if the conceptual bases are similar in both languages. This can be done by raising students' awareness of English collocational knowledge and the difference in the nuances of meaning between synonyms, e.g. *handle*, *fist*, *hand*, *grip*, etc. This can be achieved by explaining to the students that even if the synonyms in the target language can be translated using one word in their mother tongue, that does not mean that these words are interchangeable in the target language. Showing the students examples of sentences where one synonym works but

the other does not can help them understand synonymy.

In addition, L2 teachers need to explain to the students that metaphorical expressions are not only used by poets and they are not only innovative and novel (see the discussion on type 1 in section 3). On the contrary, metaphorical expressions are used in daily speech and not all metaphors are novel. In fact, the majority of metaphorical expressions used in daily conversations are conventionalized, which is why some of them may not be recognized as metaphors. Due to their overuse, the metaphoricity of conventionalized metaphors is not very obvious. To deal with this issue, L2 teachers need to expose students to real-life data used by native speakers of L2, e.g. TV shows and movies (see Fareh and Bin Moussa, 2007), to familiarize them with the idea that metaphorical expressions are used by everyone. Dictionaries may not be very helpful, since some sentences are made up, rather than being real examples. However, spoken language like that used in TV shows and movies can reflect the daily language used by native speakers of L2. For instance, L2 teachers can divide students into groups and ask them to watch movies in English (with English subtitles on) and find metaphorical expressions used in that movie. During class, every group can present the metaphorical expressions they collected and explain how the metaphors were formed, providing information on the similar aspects between the two concepts involved in the metaphor under discussion.

L2 teachers also need to discuss the fact that not all metaphorical expressions have the same frequency; their frequency depends on the concept the metaphorical expression is intended to describe, i.e. whether it is used a lot in daily speech. For instance, metaphorical expressions used to describe emotions, e.g. *anger*, *love*, etc. are quite frequent, since emotions are integral in humans' lives. On the other hand, if the concept is not used frequently in day-to-day experiences, then its frequency will not be high (cf. Fareh and Bin Moussa, 2007). L2 teachers can ask students to look for frequent metaphorical expressions used in the target language (e.g. in TV shows or in social media) and explain why these metaphorical expressions could be frequent. Performing

this task can help students understand how correspondences can be established between two concepts and how in many cases the source domain is derived from human physical experience in the world. For example, humans tend to conceive of AFFECTION as WARMTH based on their childhood experience of being embraced by their parents and the physical warmth that comes with it. This gives rise to the conceptual metaphor AFFECTION IS WARMTH and the metaphorical linguistic expressions such as *she has a warm heart* (Kövecses, 2005, p. 3). Encouraging students to establish these connections can raise their awareness of metaphor production and use, not only in L2 but also in L1, especially if L2 teachers ask them to compare metaphors in L1 and L2. Additionally, being more exposed to L2 through TV shows, movies and social media can help EFL learners become more familiar with the target culture, which can also enhance their communicative skills in L2.

On that note, as far as type 6 is concerned, culture-specific differences between languages may be revealed in metaphor processing. Littlemore and Low (2006, p. 275) reported that lack of cultural background knowledge led to misunderstandings of L2 connotations by EFL learners (see also Altakhaine and Zibin, 2014). Shokouhi and Isazadeh (2009) indicated that cultural awareness of the figurative expressions in the target language may contribute considerably to the development of communicative competence in addition to other language skills. For instance, L2 teachers need to explain to students that a concept which could be integral in one culture may not be so important in another culture. For instance, the concept of DYNASTY is important in Chinese culture to perceive the achievements of the ECONOMY (Chow, 2010). However, this concept is not employed in English. In addition, the way concepts are perceived may also vary depending on the culture, e.g. LOVE is conceptualized as a JOURNEY, UNITY, HUNTING, and so forth, in many cultures, including English, Hungarian, and Chinese, but in certain dialects of Chinese LOVE is FLYING A KITE (Yang, 2002 cited in Kövecses, 2005, p. 3). Explaining this notion can reduce the risk of negative transfer, since students may begin to know that they cannot use their L1 as a

source to help them with L2 figurative units all the time. Explaining the cultural significance or the history behind some L2 metaphors/metonymies can help students appreciate the diversity that exists in languages around the world, and how the culture of that language is reflected in the metaphorical/metonymical expressions used. With certain metaphors, showing students images that describe an important aspect of that metaphor can help them understand the concept behind it. For instance, showing students a picture of an iceberg with a big part of it hidden beneath the water and only a small part of it visible above the surface can help them understand the concept behind the metaphorical expression *tip of the iceberg*.

Conclusion

This study has examined the ability of Jordanian EFL learners to produce English metaphorical and metonymical expressions, using a completion task. It has also investigated whether the use of conceptual and linguistic knowledge of the participants' first language, i.e. Jordanian Arabic (JA), would facilitate their production of English figurative units. The study has adopted a contrastive model to compare and contrast figurative units in both English and JA. The types within the model contained six types that vary in terms of conceptual bases and linguistic expressions in English and JA. The results reveal that the participants' scores were poor in general. The main causes behind the participants' erroneous responses on the test were the following:

1. Lack of correspondence of conceptual bases in English and JA (type 3, 5 and 6).
2. Difference in linguistic expressions between English and JA (type 2, 4, 5 and 6).
3. The participants' lack of awareness of the importance of metaphors in day-to-day conversations (type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6).
4. Negative transfer of L1 conceptual or linguistic knowledge (type 1, 2, 3 and 6).
5. Lack of collocational knowledge in English (type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6).
6. Lack of knowledge of the notion of synonymy (type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6).
7. Lack of cultural background knowledge of L2 marked connotations (type 6).
8. Low frequency of some metaphorical expressions (type 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6).
9. The nature of the test, i.e. the whole-item-correct requirement (type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6).
10. The context provided for the participants on the two tests affected the participants' answers (type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6).

The fact that the participants exhibited a potential capacity to produce a similar metaphorical/metonymical expression to the one required may indicate that they do not completely lack the necessary skills to produce L2 figurative units. Thus, more attention to the area of metaphorical/metonymical expressions should be paid by L2 teachers, especially stressing the fact that metaphors are devices used in daily speech by everyone. It is recommended that a study which investigates the acquisition of synonyms by Arabic-speaking EFL learners is required to shed more light on the difficulties encountered by these learners when dealing with synonyms in English and the methods that can be followed by L2 teachers to help familiarize these learners with the concept of partial synonymy. In addition, studies that apply some of the methods suggested in this study (see section 4), following an experimental design of a pre- and post-test can be helpful to determine whether such methods can assist EFL learners in comprehending and producing figurative devices in L2.

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Appendix 1

For a full version, see Zibin (2016, p.10–12)

Linguistic Expression		Figurative Meaning (Equivalent)	Conceptual Basis (Equivalent)	Frequency in (COCA)
English	Arabic			
He is <i>madly in love</i> with her	<i>madʒnu:n fi:ha</i> lit. he is mad in her.	He loves her so much	LOVE IS MADNESS+STATES ARE LOCATIONS	0.58 per million

Type 1

Linguistic Expression		Figurative Meaning (similar)	Conceptual Basis (similar)	Frequency in (COCA)
English	Arabic			
My heart <i>skipped a beat</i> when I saw him	<i>ʔalby nxadʔ dʔ lamma fuft uh</i> lit. my heart shook violently when I saw him.	when one is startled or excited from surprise, joy or fright	THE STATE OF THE FEELINGS IS THE MATERIAL STATE OF A VITAL ORGAN	0.17 per million

Type 2

Linguistic Expression		Figurative Meaning	Figurative meaning	Conceptual Basis (different)	Frequency in (COCA)
English	Arabic				
He had <i>cold feet</i> before his wedding	<i>qays ha: tʔitʔ ridʒleih bmay ba:rdih</i> lit. Qais put his feet in cold water.	To be scared	To be totally relaxed	English: FEAR IS FEELING COLD Arabic: FEELING COLD IS BEING RELAXED	0.47 per million

Type 3

Linguistic Expression		Figurative Meaning	Conceptual Basis (equivalent)	Frequency in (COCA)
English	Arabic			
She is a <i>gold-digger</i> .	<i>bturkudʔ warah liflu:s</i> lit. she runs after money.	A woman who uses her sexual attractions to accumulate gifts.	WEALTH IS A HIDDEN OBJECT	0.22 per million

Type 4

Linguistic Expression		Figurative Meaning	Figurative Meaning	Conceptual Basis (Different)	Frequency in (COCA)
English	Arabic				
She is still adapting to life <i>in the fast lane</i>	<i>ʔi:d wāhdih ma: bitzaʔʔ if</i> lit. one hand cannot clap by itself.	In a very active or possible risky manner	Collaborative work is better than working alone.	English: SPEED OF ACTION IS SPEED OF MOTION. Arabic: MANY IS POWER	0.35 per million

Type 5

Linguistic Expression		Figurative Meaning	Figurative Meaning	Conceptual Basis (Different) (Different)	Frequency in (COCA)
English	Arabic				
Princess Diana had <i>blue blood</i> .	<i>dammu xafi:f</i> lit. his blood is light.	She is of a noble family; aristocratic ancestry.	He has a sense of humour	English: BLOOD FOR STATUS Arabic: BLOOD FOR PERSONALITY	0.14 per million

Type 6

Appendix 2

Completion test

Fill in the blank with the suitable metaphorical expression by following the three clues provided for each example; the first clue gives you an idea about the meaning of the expression you should use, the *italicised* one. The second clue provides you with one word (between brackets) among the others you should use in your answer. The third clue indicates the number of words you should use in your answer. Below is an illustrative example that will guide you:

Q1. Assad outright says that you must battle terrorism, which is what he calls the uprising in Syria. It must be handled with an _____ (2), and that victory is near.

Clue 1: *ruthless control*

Clue 2: (iron)

Clue 3: (2)

Answer: iron fist/hand

Q2. I come from a huge loving family, and they've been supportive since day one. So my parents are still _____ (3). It's their 40th anniversary coming up in November.

Clue 1: *love someone very much*

Clue 2: (madly)

Clue 3: (3)

Answer: madly in love

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Internet Sources

The origin of the metaphorical expression blue blood

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The origin of the metaphorical expression Achilles' heel

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