Using Metaphorical Conceptualisation to Construct and Develop ESL Students' Writing:
An Exploratory Study

Wan Wan

PhD

The University of York
Department of Education

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Abstract

It has become reasonably common in applied linguistics and teacher training research, to investigate language teachers' and learners' understandings of teaching and/or learning through metaphor analysis, based on the idea that identifying and discussing metaphors can bring implicit assumptions to the surface, encourage personal reflection, and as a result provide some insight into individuals' perspectives on given topics; however, very few studies to date have begun to examine participants' specific language skills, such as academic writing. In the light of this, the present study adopted an exploratory stance, exploring seven Chinese MA students' conceptualisations of academic writing, particularly the required writing assignments/essays that they had to complete in an academic year, by means of analysing metaphors they created in the 'X is Y' format (e.g., "writing is…because…"). By examining individual students' metaphorical conceptualisations of writing over three academic terms during a year-long MA programme, the hope was that the results could not only shed light on how students developed their writing, focussing primarily on changes in their conceptualisations of writing, but also look to see whether such changes would lead to adjustments in their writing practices. In addition, given the fact that few metaphor researchers have argued for the investigation of metaphor-based interaction in class, the study was thus to explore the impact on sharing individual personal metaphors of writing on participants' conceptualisations of their writing practices. Methodologically, the study also examined the validity of the 'X is Y' metaphor elicitation task, by investigating the linguistic contexts where various kinds of task difficulty/failure occurred and offering possible solutions.

The present study adopted a phenomenological and qualitative approach and involved two phases: a methodological preliminary study and a main study. The

purpose of the preliminary study was to investigate how participants responded to a range of writing-related prompts requesting explanations for task difficulty/failure, so that the task format which led to the most successful answers could be adopted in the main study. The main study was conducted in a context of nine academic writing workshops over three academic terms, where seven Chinese MA students were asked to (1) provide metaphors of their writing via a prompt in "academic writing is…because…" format and (2) share with their classmates metaphors in relation to personal writing experiences. To reduce the incidence of unsuccessful answers to the metaphor elicitation tasks, all participants in Term 1 were also asked to attend a 'Learning to Use Metaphor' training programme in the form of four ready-made graduate lectures.

Six conclusions were drawn on the basis of the findings from both preliminary study and the main study: (1) metaphors were used to convey multiple aspects of students' conceptualisations of writing; (2) sharing and discussing personal metaphors helped participants improve their writing; (3) participants demonstrated varying degrees of change in their conceptualisations of academic writing; (4) participants became more sensitised to metaphor, and to thinking critically about it; (5) the use of a metaphor elicitation technique to examine informants' conceptualisations was not methodologically transparent and (6) training both about metaphor and in using it were important.

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Abbreviations and Conventions

Abbreviations/ Conventions	Definition
BALLI	A Likert-scale questionnaire known as Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory designed by Horwitz (1985)
CMT	Conceptual (or cognitive) Metaphor Theory
ELS	English Language Support
ESL	English as a Second Language
LLE	Language Learning and Education
L2	Second Language
MA	Master of Arts
MIP	Metaphor Identification Procedure, developed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007)
MIV	A method, introduced by Cameron (2003) to identify linguistic metaphors through Vehicle terms
MLE	Metaphorical Linguistic Expression
MG	Metaphor Group
NNS	Non-native Speaker of English
SCT	Sociocultural theory, introduced by Vygotsky (1978) with respect to the development of higher mental functions
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SG	Simile Group
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

Q   Question marker

"…"   Double invented commas denote direct quotations

'…'   Single inverted commas are used to highlight or emphasise words

or phrases

Acknowledgements

If I have built my castles in the sky, my work needs to be lost, I must now build the foundations under them.
-Henry David Thoreau

I continue to build my castles in the sky and to construct the foundations beneath them. But I do not build alone. The foundation—the bricks and mortar—of this thesis was shaped by many people, who provided me with support and encouragement throughout the process.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that all the work presented in this thesis is original and based on my own work. Parts of the thesis, in shorter versions with different titles, have been published since I started the study:

- Wan, W. (2011). An examination of the validity of metaphor analysis studies: Problems with metaphor elicitation techniques. *Metaphor and the Social World*, *1*(2), 262-288 (mentioned in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5).

- Wan, W., Low, G., & Miao, L. (2011). From students' and teachers' perspectives: Metaphorical conceptualisations of EFL teachers' roles. *System, 39*(3), 403-415 (mentioned in section 2.7 in Chapter 2).

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background and Rationale

Writing in a foreign language is often considered the most difficult of the four language skills (namely, listening, speaking, writing and reading) to acquire (Nunan, 1999). Trying to master writing in English, particularly of the sort appropriate to the context of a higher degree, is hard enough for native speakers of English, but it is even harder when one is writing in a foreign language (e.g., Hinkel, 2002; Kroll, 1990).

If non-native speaker of English (hereafter NNS) students have moved from, for example, Eastern Asia, after doing their first degree there, to an English speaking educational environment (e.g., the UK or USA), the fact is that the whole cultural scene, the academic expectations of universities as well as the degree level being one step higher (e.g., a Master's level course), can present some significant changes for the newcomers, which serve to compound the difficulties as regards their integration into the research community of practice in their disciplines. As assessment appears on the scene fairly rapidly in one-year Masters' programmes (the norm for most 'overseas' graduate students), therefore NNS students often need to adapt fast (soon after the course starts) to the new environment.

While they are likely to want to apply skills, assumptions, expectations and beliefs acquired from their previous experiences, cultural contexts or language(s), the chances are that several of these prior experiences may well not be applicable, and this is likely to result in confusion, frustration and/or shattered beliefs when the first assessment grades (e.g., assignments and essays) appear. One implication is that NNS students need to work out what is expected of them,

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establish where this differs from their current skills, experiences, expectations and beliefs, and then attempt to change their learning, including their writing. As a result, it seems reasonable to assume that exploring these students' beliefs about their writing can be one possible way to understand the development of this particular skill.

Altering deeply ingrained beliefs and practices is likely to take time, and support may well be needed across the academic year. However, pedagogically one has to start somewhere, and a useful starting point would seem to be asking students to explore their conceptualisations of their writing (White & Bruning, 2005). Surprisingly, the feasibility and usefulness of doing this remain under-researched.

Over the last decade, with the growing number of Chinese Master's students in the UK, the quality of their academic English writing skills has been gaining increasing attention (Tian & Low, 2011). As a Chinese student, I became interested in learning more about how Chinese students develop their writing on one-year Master's programmes and that is the starting point of the current research. Given the usefulness of examining students' beliefs and assumptions in helping them understand the development of their own writing, I therefore decided to focus on how students conceptualised their writing.

My initial thought of using metaphor to uncover students' conceptualisations of writing derived from a small survey about Chinese MA students' difficulties with academic English writing I conducted in 2007 in York. This survey was designed for my Master's coursework assignment. 20 students enrolled on MA in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (MATESOL) participated in a set of individual interviews.

One student explained, *"I think academic writing is difficult; searching*

for material for my essays is like searching for a needle in a haystack" (my trans.).

Although it remained unclear why the student chose to describe his writing via metaphor, clearly, the way he reported his problem with writing, via the "*searching for a needle in a haystack*" metaphor, made sense to him, which, in turn, enabled me to understand that his writing problem could stem from a lack of strategies for finding useful sources. Interestingly, the use of metaphor to describe one's relevant academic writing experiences, including individuals' personal emotions about, frustration with, and/or concepts of writing was also identified in six other students' responses. As far as I can recall, this was the first time I recognised the use of metaphor to describe various aspects of students' writing, even though I had been aware of the application of metaphor in language education, as a way to investigate informants' understanding of their learning and/or teaching (e.g., Cameron & Low, 1999; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Ellis, 2008). As a result, I became interested in exploring questions such as: (a) are there alternative ways of talking about writing, such as using metaphor, which students could choose to use?; (b) how far do students create their thoughts about, feelings and/or emotions towards, personal deficiencies in, and approaches to, academic writing via their metaphors?; (c) if and how can students' metaphors be employed to understand the development of their writing?; (d) does using metaphor help students understand the gap between what they are currently doing and what they need to do? and (e) how far can students change their writing practices in order to improve their writing? This curiosity encouraged me to design and construct the present study.

A review of the literature reveals that over the last few decades there has developed a heightened awareness of the importance of metaphors as a tool for uncovering participants' conceptualisations in language education. Both Cognitive

Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and Vygotskyan notions of the interactive nature of language (i.e., metaphor) and thought (Lantolf &Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978) within Sociocultural Theory suggest that metaphor can be treated as a mediational tool, whereby the researchers' interpretations of informants' thinking and understanding are constructed from accounts given by them in specific social environments. Informants' metaphors have accordingly been utilised for reflection and consciousness raising among students and teachers, to shape their classroom practices (Tobin, 1990), to mediate understanding of their beliefs about teaching (and learning) in the classroom and ultimately to predict behaviours likely to follow on from them (de Guerrero and Villamil, 2002; Wan, Low & Li, 2011). Quite a high proportion of these studies have collected informants' narratives by completing researcher-constructed prompts involving part of a metaphor or simile in 'X is (like) Y' format; for instance, "Learning is (like)… ". Some studies (for example, Jin & Cortazzi, 2011, or Saban et al., 2007) further ask respondents to justify their metaphorical reasoning (i.e., "X is (like) Y *because…*") in order to try to interpret the (metaphorical) language in terms of their personal thinking or beliefs. The use of such a metaphor elicitation technique to analyse beliefs is not recent. The last fifteen years have seen the publication of a series of studies examining both teachers' and students' understandings of teaching and/or learning through various metaphor elicitation tasks (e.g., Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Ellis, 1999, 2001; Kramsch, 2003; Oxford et al., 1998; Woodward, 1991; Zapata & Lacorte, 2007), based on the idea that identifying and discussing metaphors can bring implicit assumptions into awareness, or encourage personal reflection, and as a result provide some insights into individuals' perspectives on given topics (Cameron & Low, 1999; Cameron & Maslen, 2010).

1.2 Statement of the Research Gaps and Problems

Although second language (L2) writing studies have started to explore learners'
understanding of the concepts and phenomena involved, it is perhaps surprising
that little work has been carried out concerning learners' beliefs about the nature
of writing and their own writing process (e.g., White & Buring, 2005). Also, there
seems to be little published work that has investigated the relationship between
learners' conceptualisations of writing and their associated writing practices.

With reference to the metaphor studies on investigating participants'
understanding, firstly, a considerable number of metaphor studies in the last two
decades have examined both teachers' and students' understandings of teaching
and/or learning; however, very few have examined participants' specific language
skills, such as writing (exceptions being, Armstrong, 2007; Hart, 2009; Tomlinson,
1986; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005; Wan, 2007). Whether and how far
participants can use metaphor to conceptualise their own writing and in what ways
their metaphors of writing can be utilised for understanding their own writing thus
remains unclear.

In addition, the majority of metaphor studies have often been set up in one
format, collecting, categorising, interpreting and reporting on metaphors from
participants, rather than letting the participants have the opportunities to share
their metaphors or to learn from each other (Hart, 2009; Wan, Low & Li, 2001). It
seems unclear (a) what will happen, when participants enter into a discussion
about individuals' personal metaphors and (b) in what ways the metaphor-based
interaction can influence individuals' actual practices (e.g., their writing output).

Lastly, regarding the validity of the use of metaphor as a research tool, the
last decade has, as noted above, seen a considerable number of studies employing
a metaphor elicitation technique, involving an 'X is (like) Y' format to investigate

language teachers' and learners' understandings of teaching and/or learning. Although a few recent studies have reported the proportion of unsuccessful answers to this type of task, and identified a number of issues relating to task difficulty, in general, it remains the case that very few published metaphorical conceptualisation papers discuss in any real detail or depth the validity of the method used; indeed, a considerable number do not discuss methodological problems at all. The very fact that invalid responses have been periodically reported suggests that one cannot simply assume that the use of 'thinking of a metaphor/simile' technique to examine informants' conceptualisations, at least in the context of researching educational practices, is unproblematic or methodologically transparent (Todd & Low, 2010; Wan, 2011). What is needed therefore is an understanding of where and why the problems occur, plus an investigation of possible solutions.

1.3 Aims and Significance of the Study

The present study adopted an exploratory stance, taking a group of seven Chinese MA students' and exploring their conceptualisations of academic writing, particularly with reference to the required writing assignments/essays they had to complete in the academic year (i.e., 2009-2010) by means of analysing metaphors they created in the 'X is Y' format (e.g., "writing is…because…"). Given the research gaps and problems discussed above (see section 1.2), the present study was designed to address the gaps in the literature with respect to (a) the use of elicited metaphors to interpret participants' conceptualisations of academic writing, (b) possible impact of metaphor-based group discussion on participants' conceptualisations of their writing practice and (c) the solutions to the methodological problems with the metaphor elicitation technique. In addition, the

study was intended to be a contribution to knowledge of how Chinese university students develop their writing skills in a one-year MA course in the UK.

1.4 Research Questions

In view of the above research aims, I developed the following questions as the basis of the study:

RQ1 How do students metaphorically conceptualise their academic writing experiences over a year-long MA programme?

RQ2 What happens when participants enter into group discussions about their metaphors of writing?

RQ3 How do students' conceptualisations of writing change over the course of year-long MA programme?

RQ4 How far and why do participants find it difficult to complete the metaphor elicitation tasks in the 'X is Y' format?

RQ5 Are there any possible solutions which can resolve the problem(s) in completion of the metaphor elicitation tasks?

1.5 Research Design and Methodology

Since the current study aimed at presenting a detailed description of a small group of Chinese MA students' beliefs and understandings relating to academic writing over an academic year, it required an in-depth investigation of their authentic academic writing experiences. It was felt that it would be more useful, in the present study, to adopt a qualitative research paradigm and phenomenology as its theoretical and philosophical orientation (Creswell, 2009; Dörnyei, 2007; Liamputtong, 2009).

There were two phases to the study: a preliminary study and the main study. The preliminary study was used to investigate how seventeen participants responded to a range of writing-related prompts requesting explanations for task difficulty/failure, so that (a) the task format which led to the most successful answers could be adopted in the main study and (b) appropriate preparation could be made ahead of the later main study. The preliminary study data were collected through participants' written responses to the prompts and via individual follow-up interviews. The main study was conducted in the context of nine academic writing workshops over three academic terms (see section 4.6.1), where seven Chinese MA students were asked to (a) provide metaphors of writing in the 'X is Y' format (e.g., "writing is…because…") and (b) share with their classmates metaphors in relation to their personal writing experiences. To reduce the incidence of unsuccessful answers to the metaphor elicitation task, all participants in Term 1 were also asked to attend a three-stage 'Learning to Use Metaphor' training programme in the form of four ready-made graduate lectures (see section 5.4). Data for the main study were collected from students' written responses to the metaphor prompt, individual follow-up interviews and classroom observations. The data analysis included the analysis of participants' elicited metaphors and their comments on sharing and discussing individuals' personal metaphors of writing. Finally, comparing individuals' personal metaphors of writing over the three terms, I intended to establish what, if any, changes occurred in participant's conceptualisations of their writing practice.

1.6 Terminology Used

The following is a list of the terminology used in this thesis:

1. *Conceptualisation* is used in a broad sense, as a single representation of a person's mental activities, such as beliefs, concepts, and understanding (e.g., Armstrong, 2007; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2002).

2. *Domain* refers to the ideas or semantic field referred to by a lexical item. According to Cameron (2003), a domain is not just a collection of concepts or entities, visualized as nodes that can be labelled nominally, but also the relations between the entities—relations of cause and effect, composition, contrasts, etc.

3. *Source domain,* in a metaphor, normally represents a concrete, relatively familiar, or relatively well-known entity. It is often used as one kind of evidence for the existence of conceptual metaphor, for example, "money" in "Time is money" (Kövecses, 2010, p. 4).

4. *Target domain,* in a metaphor*,* normally means an abstract, relatively unfamiliar, or relatively unknown object. The target domain is the domain that people try to understand through the use of the source domain, for example, "time" in "Time is money" (Kövecses, 2010, p. 4).

5. *Mapping* is the process of making relational connections (also called correspondences) between objects in a source domain and objects in a target domain.

6. *Vehicle* is a metaphorical focus, which is a word or phrase that somehow contrasts with (is incongruous or anomalous with) the topic of the on-going text. *Topic* is the content of the on-going discourse (Cameron, 2003).

7. *Metaphor* is, in the cognitive linguistic view, defined as a specific example of a mapping between a source and a target domain (also called conceptual metaphor), in which the target domain is understood in terms

of the source domain. This definition of the term will be explored in Chapter 2 (Kövecses, 2010, p. 4).

8. *Metaphorical entailment*, in this thesis, refers to the explanations given by participants for their rationale of establishing the correspondences between the sources and the targets in their metaphors (Kramsch, 2003).

9. *Metaphorical linguistic expressions* are words or other linguistic expressions that come from the language or terminology of the relatively more concrete conceptual domain (i.e., source domain) (Kövecses, 2010, p. 4).

10. *Elicited Metaphor* is used to indicate a specific type of metaphorical linguistic expression, in which a participant is asked to complete a metaphor-like prompt such as 'Academic writing is like _____.'

1.7 Synopsis of the Thesis

This thesis is comprised of ten chapters. The present chapter outlines the motivation for the study, research aims and significance and the initial research questions. The reminder of the thesis is organised in the following way:

Chapter 2 looks at the background context for the study by reviewing the existing research in the field of learners' conceptualisations and by giving an introduction to current research, with regard to using metaphor in uncovering participants' understanding of teaching and/or learning, paying particular attention to (a) the application of metaphor in writing studies, (b) metaphor-based interaction and (c) the validity of metaphor analysis as a research tool, particularly the metaphor elicitation tasks. The chapter highlights the fact that there is a lack of empirical studies looking at (a) how students use metaphor to conceptualise their writing; (b) how far discussions of individuals' personal metaphors can

affect participants' actual practice, (in the present study, namely, academic writing) and (c) how to improve the validity of metaphor elicitation techniques.

Chapter 3 describes the preliminary study designed to (a) investigate how participants' responded to a range of writing-related metaphor prompts requesting explanations for task difficulty/failure, so that the task format which led to the most successful answers could be adopted in the main study, and (b) collect reasons for task difficulty in greater detail, so that appropriate preparation could be made ahead of the main study. The reasons given for task problems and difficulties helped me decide the methods of support that needed to be provided to participants at the beginning of the main study, in order to help them cope with the writing-related metaphor elicitation task then used.

Chapter 4 reports on the research design and methodology for the collection of participants' metaphors of writing, their reactions to the metaphor training sessions, as well as their comments on the metaphor-based group discussions. The research approach used in the main study, namely, phenomenology and the qualitative paradigm are outlined and justified.

Chapter 5 contains the results and a discussion of the 'Learning to Use Metaphor' training programme, as part of the main study, presenting the perceived reasons for participants' difficulties with the metaphor elicitation task and discussing possible solutions, by introducing training in the form of four ready-made graduate lectures. This chapter also contains a discussion of how the training helped participants deal with the metaphor elicitation task.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 present the findings of participants' metaphors of writing as well as their reactions to the three group discussions about individuals' personal metaphors across the three academic terms.

Chapter 9 synthesises the findings about participants' elicited metaphors

of their writing across the three academic terms, in order to present the changes in each participant's conceptualisations of writing, as well as their writing practices. This chapter also includes a discussion of the pedagogical and research implications.

Chapter 10 summarises the main findings of the study, discusses its contributions, implications, applications, and limitations, and suggests some areas for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature and Contextual Background

2.1 Preamble

This chapter covers three dimensions of the study, namely learners' conceptualisations, metaphor analysis, and using metaphor analysis in conceptualisations of writing. Section 2.2 begins with a review of conceptualisation studies, grouped in terms of three types of approach. Section 2.3 discusses previous studies of learners' conceptualisations of writing. Section 2.4 provides the theoretical background of metaphor analysis. After this, a review of methods for identification of metaphor and approaches to metaphor analysis is given in sections 2.5 and 2.6. Section 2.7 discusses the use of metaphor analysis in language education, including the research gaps and problems, which are used to construct the present study. Section 2.8 revisits the key points identified in the relevant literature.

2.2 Learners' Conceptualisations in Language Education

As a psychological term in the education arena, conceptualisation has been commonly used to refer to someone's beliefs, conceptions, and/or understanding as a set of mental constructions or representations, which guides, or creates and maintains, a disposition towards someone's specific teaching, learning and /or classroom practices (e.g., Armstrong, 2009; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2002; Oxford et al., 1998; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005; Wan, Low & Li, 2011).

Learners' conceptions of phenomena such as knowing and learning were not of much interest in language education until the publication of Perry's

pioneering work in the 1970s, which involved students describing their college experiences and their "transformation over college years" (Perry, 1970, p.25). Perry and his followers (e.g., BouJaoude, 2000; Flavell, 1987; Tobin & Lamaster, 1995) argued that learners held a set of beliefs or assumptions, representable as conceptualisations of specific learning tasks, which considerably affected the effort they wanted to exert and the outcomes of their learning (e.g., Schraw & Bruning, 1996; White & Bruning, 2005). In other words, once a particular belief or assumption is invoked, learners may well behave in a manner consistent with it.

2.2.1 Approaches to Research on Learners' Conceptualisations

Numerous studies in the last a few decades have endeavoured to create sets of propositions to reflect the conceptualisations, which learners have had about their learning, particularly with regard to second language acquisition (SLA). This includes beliefs and/or conceptions about learners' identities, the nature of language learning, learners' expectations, learners' learning strategies, learner autonomy, and learners' self-management (e.g., Benson, 2001; Cotterall, 1999; Horwitz, 1985; Victori & Lockhart, 1995; Victori, 1999; White, 1999). Given the differences in defining learners' beliefs and the relationship between learners' beliefs and relevant actions, Barcelos (2003) suggested three approaches to categorise studies of learners' beliefs: normative, metacognitive and contextual.

2.2.1.1 The Normative Approach

The term 'normative approach' is used to refer to "studies on culture, which see students' culture as an explanation for their behaviours in class" (Barcelos, 2003, p.11). Studies within the normative approach thus emphasise the use of learners' beliefs to predict their future performance in the classroom. The data under the

normative approach are mostly analysed through descriptive statistics obtained by the use of Likert-scale questionnaires (Cotterall, 1999; Horwitz, 1985, 1987; Sakui & Gaies, 1999). For example, in order to systematically assess foreign language learners' beliefs about language learning, Horwitz (1985) designed a 34-item Likert-scale questionnaire known as *Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory* (BALLI), which has been commonly used in relating learners' beliefs about language learning to their learning and communication strategies, the difficulty of language learning and their motivation to learn (e.g., Yang, 1992).

According to Barcelos (2003), learners' conceptualisations about language learning within this approach are, in most cases, characterised as stable, in the form of preconceived notions, myths or misconceptions (e.g., Horwitz, 1987, 1988). This method of defining learners' conceptions has been criticised by several researchers (e.g., Allen, 1996; Barcelos, 2003; Kalaja, 2003), who argued that such an interpretation of learners' mental representations was incomplete in that (a) people's conceptualisations can be changed (Kalaja, 2000) and (b) the definition ignored the social aspects of one's conceptualisations that were embedded in specific contexts (e.g., the language classroom).

In addition, researchers have also argued that, although the normative approach can provide a general picture of learners' beliefs and predict how they could influence learners' future behaviours, the validity of the data cannot be taken for granted, due to the limitations of questionnaires (e.g., Barcelos, 2003). These limitations include the discrepancy between (a) the participants' interpretations of the items and the researcher's original design and (b) the researcher's interpretations of the data and the participants' intended meanings. In addition, it seems almost impossible to examine the relationship between learners' beliefs about learning and their relevant actions (e.g., their classroom practices)

via questionnaires, due to isolating the data collection from the learning contexts. It thus remains unclear (a) if learners behave in accordance with their beliefs and (a) why they have these beliefs. Therefore, there is a need for research designs and related techniques to consider factors external to the informants, such as contextual elements, when measuring learners' beliefs and their relevant learning behaviours.

2.2.1.2 The Metacognitive Approach

Learners' beliefs, within the metacognitive approach, are considered as relevant to their metacognitive knowledge. Flavell (1979) pointed out that metacognitive knowledge involved "learners' understanding of themselves and others, their comprehension of task difficulty, the availability of their processing skills, and their awareness and choice of learning strategies, which interact with one another" (p.12). Therefore, learners use their metacognitive knowledge to direct their progress in the learning process (Wenden, 1998).

Employing semi-structured interviews and/or self-reports to collect data, studies within the metacognitive approach rely on informants' verbal accounts, encouraging them to define their own learning beliefs through reflecting on their learning processes (e.g., Goh, 1997; Wenden, 1986, 1998, 2001; White, 1999). For example, to classify learners' knowledge about language learning, Wenden (1986) adopted semi-structured interviews, whereby twenty-five ESL adult students were able to reflect on and talk about their learning experiences in the following four areas: their language proficiency, the results of their learning efforts, their roles in the learning process and their best methods for learning (cited in Barcelos, 2003, p.18). The study revealed that the students had a high

degree of metacognitive awareness and were conscious of their learning strategies in the learning process.

Clearly, the metacognitive approach allows participants to construct accounts for their conceptions of learning, through reflecting on their individual learning processes. Unlike the normative approach, the data are not obtained from a set of researcher-constructed items. It seems that there is no need to worry, within this approach, about the problem of the discrepancy between the participants' interpretations of the items and the researcher's original design resulting from using questionnaires. However, similar to the key limitation of the normative approach, the metacognitive approach does not infer beliefs from actual learning practices. Thus, it remains entirely unclear whether and how far specific contexts can influence individuals' beliefs and their related behaviours.

2.2.1.3 The Contextual Approach

What significantly distinguishes the contextual approach from the two approaches above is, as its name suggests, the attention paid to specific contexts, with the central claim that learners are consistently establishing and modifying their beliefs about specific events, while they engage with those contexts (Allen, 1996). Beliefs are thus viewed as embedded in contexts, in which learners are operating.

Studies within the contextual approach are generally descriptive in nature, concentrating on the interpretations of participants' authentic experiences in relevant learning contexts. Data collection, as Barcelos (2000) notes, usually combines various methods, including classroom observations, discourse analysis (Kalaja, 2003; Riley, 1994), semi-structured interviews (Kim, 2009), stimulated recalls (Allen, 1996; Barcelos, 2000), diaries and narratives (Allen, 1996; Hosenfeld, 2003), and metaphor analysis (Block, 1992; Ellis, 1999; McGrath,

2006). For instance, in Allen's (1996) one-term study that examined the impact of a teacher's beliefs on a Libyan ESL learner's beliefs about language learning, the data collection involved classroom observations, interviews, learning logs, and course documents. The results indicated that the teacher's beliefs about language learning had a large impact on the student's beliefs. A major change in the student's conceptions of language learning was identified, from "teachers are completely responsible for students' learning and they should have a native-like pronunciation" to "students were responsible for their learning and did not have to gain native-like pronunciation" (Allen, 1996, p. 79). The student's beliefs had become more similar to those of the teacher by the end of the term. The results clearly showed that the student's beliefs about learning language were highly relevant to his learning context (i.e., his teacher's beliefs); beliefs were thus not as stable as had often been assumed.

The use of metaphor analysis has been acknowledged as another useful tool, which enables researchers to look into informants' beliefs and conceptualisations, based on the idea that identifying and discussing informants' metaphors can bring implicit beliefs and tacit knowledge to awareness, encourage personal reflection, and as a result provide some insight into individuals' perspectives on given topics (Cameron & Low, 1999; Mahlios et al., 2010; Patchen & Crawford 2011; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2002, 2005).Tracing the theoretical foundations of academic research, specifically in the educational contexts, Jensen (2006) argues that metaphor analysis is a legitimate and viable method for qualitative investigation into educational theory and practice. This argument was based on the evolution of research methodologies that focused on understanding participants' perceptions of educational theory and practice through language in the 1960s and 1970s. He suggested that metaphor could be seen as a

bridge, accessing someone's belief, conception, and/or understanding, a view which derives from Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Lakoff and Johnson argued that the human conceptual system was metaphorically constructed, which means that metaphors are common cultural conceptions and play an important role in defining the way people perceive the world (see section 2.4.1). The last few decades have seen an increasing number of studies, particularly in language education, which have employed metaphor analysis to examine individuals' views and understanding of teaching and/or learning (e.g., Berry & Sahlberg, 1996; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Ellis, 2001; Wan, Low & Li, 2011; Zapata & Lacorte, 2007). For instance, Ellis (1999, 2001) analysed learners' diaries in search of the metaphors they used (i.e., they constructed themselves) and looked into how they talked about their language learning experiences. From a contextual perspective, as Riley (1994) concluded, if learning beliefs were defined as the 'lenses' through which students framed their experiences, metaphors might shed light on these lenses, and ultimately allowed researchers to access students' mental processes of learning and teaching. A more detailed discussion about Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the application of metaphor analysis in education is given in sections 2.4.1 and 2.7.

In sum, the contextual approach emphasises the dynamic and social nature of beliefs about learning, arguing that the role the social environment plays in cognitive development is significant, and stressing the perspective that specific learning activities are suited to certain contexts. This goes beyond the way beliefs are treated in the normative and the metacognitive approaches, as stable mental traits, and takes the social aspects of beliefs into account. Although both the normative approach and the metacognitive approach attempt to reinforce the view that learners' beliefs can influence their classroom behaviours/actions, neither of

them provides sufficient evidence to allow us to be certain of the nature of the relationship, since they only make inferences, based either on researchers' subjective analysis (i.e., the normative approach) or on participants' statements (i.e., the metacognitive approach). Most studies within the contextual approach involve an element of classroom observation in the data collection methods, which enables researchers to actually examine the relationship between participants' beliefs and their actions and make more evidence-based inferences; however, the result is that this type of study tends to be extremely time-consuming, which makes it difficult to conduct with a large sample size (Barcelos, 2003). In addition, one of the most difficult problems regarding studies of people's internal behaviours (such as beliefs and conceptions) is how to study something which is abstract. It may be difficult for informants to precisely describe their mental activities in an event (e.g., learning), which, in turn, likely affect the researcher's interpretations of their mental constructions or representations of the subject matter. To validate the research findings, a possible solution is to triangulate the data by using different sources of information.

2.3 Learners' Conceptualisations of Writing

2.3.1 Reasons for Researching Learners' Conceptualisations of Writing

Apart from an intention to examine the relationship between learners' beliefs and their writing practices, Polio (2003) in his critical review of research on second language writing, gives at least two reasons to account for why writing researchers have started to pay attention to participants in the learning and teaching process, including participants' experiences, assumptions and beliefs about their writing.

The first reason has to do with the result of a shift from a product-oriented approach to process-oriented approach in researching writing. Process-oriented approaches came into writing research in the 1960s, reinforcing the idea that writing was a way of discovering ideas. One of the central claims, within process-oriented approaches, is that when writers begin to engage in constructing meaning that occurs during the planning, translating, and reviewing stages of their writing, they bring with them a myriad of experiences, assumptions and beliefs (Zamel, 1976). After that, process-based approaches have been found to be helpful to researchers who want to examine writers' strategies and the development of their writing (e.g., Bosher, 1998; Penningtion & So, 1993; Zamel, 1983). Writing researchers thus began to shift their attention from the end product to the learning and writing period leading to a written product, with a special focus on the learners' cognitive processes used in writing, holding that learners' writing needed to be regarded as a set of distinct thinking processes. To gain a better understanding of how learners' develop their writing and to help them improve their writing, researchers concluded that it was inadequate to merely be concerned with the end written products; learners' beliefs and understanding of their writing needed to be taken into account (e.g., Armstrong, 2007; Cumming, 1988; Dyson & Freedman, 2003; Emig, 1971; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Silva, 1993; Zamel, 1976). In addition, within such a learner-centred framework, making sense of what students think of writing was considered beneficial, as a means of helping teachers to modify their teaching, which, in turn could help learners to be successful (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Gee, 1996).

The second reason is related to the integration of social and cultural perspectives in writing, where learners are viewed as members of a social and cultural community who can be researched in and out of academic settings (e.g.,

Dyson & Freedman, 2003). In other words, a whole range of things that exist independently with respect to what Dyson and Freedman (2003) termed 'the task environment', such as teachers (including teachers' feedback), peers' views, audiences, and topics, could possibly impact on writing performance, which means that an individual writer cannot stand alone as a totally independent agent of his/her act of writing. Within such a view of writing, the writing process is not personal, but interactional and social, involving and reflecting the ways learners approach and interact with the task environment. To better understand learners' writing, researchers have acknowledged that identifying the impact of various aspects of social contexts on individuals' writing is necessary (e.g., Currie, 1993; Swales, 1990). In short, it has become evident that learners' epistemologies, assumptions, and perceptions about the writing contexts can be useful resources for researchers who aim at investigating what impact those social factors have on learners' writing.

2.3.2 Research on Learners' Conceptualisations of Writing

A large number of writing studies, over the last few decades, have begun to examine participants' conceptualisations of writing and most, but not all, are qualitative, in that they aim to describe a phenomenon, generating knowledge about learners/writers' writing experiences (Polio, 2003). Some studies are general and focus on specific perspectives on students' writing, such as students' beliefs and understanding about writing in general (Lavelle & Zuercher, 2001), their interpretations of written tasks (Kirsh, 1988), teachers' feedback on their writing (Diab, 2005), or their self-confidence in writing (Pajares & Johnson, 1994), while others examine writers' conceptions of writing in different genres,

including essays (Campbell, Smith, & Brooker, 1998; Hounsell, 1997), science writing (Levin & Wagner, 2006), and creative writing (Light, 2002).

Despite the fact that writing researchers have recognised that writing is inseparable from writers' intentions and beliefs through exploring their understanding of the concepts and phenomena involved, there appears to be little investigation of writers' conceptualisations with respect to their own processes of writing, including generating written ideas, setting goals, organising, editing and revising drafts (e.g., Armstrong, 2008; White & Burn, 2005). How far writers' cognition (including their beliefs, conceptions and understanding) in relation to writing processes could affect their writing behaviours, as well as their final products, seems to be an underrepresented area of current research on writing.

To access people's conceptualisations, researchers have acknowledged that the language that people use is often a clue to their perceptions of the role they are to project and their approach to knowledge. In the case of writing, investigating these clues may offer useful insights about what is entailed for students in trying to write in certain contexts (Herrington, 1992, p.93). The analysis of people's metaphorical language has thus become simply one avenue for exploring people's conceptualisations. For instance, Levin and Wagner (2006) is one of few research studies (others are Armstrong, 2007; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005; Hart, 2009; Wan, 2007), which have employed metaphor as a research tool to uncover students' conceptions of writing, in their case, writing-to-learn tasks in science writing. Their methodological focus on emergent (spontaneous) metaphors tracked changes in students' views on writing through the course of their writing in the science classroom. The study suggested that cognitive and discursive insights into metaphors, both spontaneous and elicited, contributed to a better and more concrete grasp of students' conceptions of writing,

facilitating reflection on the actions and emotions of students in the act of writing. Importantly, the diversity of metaphorical themes identified in their conceptualisations indicated that students' writing caused them to reconceptualise their views of writing at different stages in their writing processes. The study confirmed the usefulness of using metaphor as a research tool for exploring student conceptions of writing, and also demonstrated that metaphor can be a "dynamic, constructive and context-sensitive conceptual phenomenon", which can "evoke reactive responses in students, reflect their beliefs and views in certain contexts and which at the same time is influenced and accommodated by their experiences" (Levin & Wagner, 2006, p.266). The next section moves to a discussion of the theoretical rationale of metaphor as a research tool for investigating people's conceptualisations.

2.4 Metaphor as a Theoretical and Methodological Approach

2.4.1 Metaphor in Conceptual Metaphor Theory

In the 1980s, traditional views of metaphor, which focused on metaphor as a 'literary gimmick' or 'purely linguistic device', were challenged primarily by Conceptual Metaphor Theory (hereafter CMT), which fundamentally treated metaphor as a cognitive tool used by people's conceptual systems for the conceptualisation and the symbolisation of abstract concepts (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

The basic assumption of CMT, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) noted, was that there was a set of ordinary metaphoric concepts (also called conceptual metaphors) that were used to structure people's everyday concepts in certain ways. These concepts structure the way that people perceive and view the world. The theory links human cognition, comprehension and linguistic expressions with

environmental factors. For example, when someone says "his temper flared up" or "he erupted", the listener may easily transform terms from the discourse on *eruption* into the other discourse on *anger* by exploiting an elaborated underlying conceptual metaphor "ANGER IS HEAT" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This is what CMT is about: metaphor is defined as the means of expressing and understanding one object or phenomenon in terms of another, often crossing the borders between the mental and physical and transferring from the abstract to the concrete (Gibbs, 1994; Kramsch, 2003), through the recognition of certain shared structural similarities.

Following CMT, in the cognitive linguistic view (e.g., Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010; Ungerer & Schmidt, 1996), metaphors are sets of mappings between a more concrete or physical source domain (e.g., heat) and a more abstract target domain (e.g., anger), which, in essence, allow them to readily conceptualise relations among elements in those domains, in order to ultimately make sense of the unfamiliar target domains (Ungerer & Schmid, 1996). Here, mapping refers to a set of systematic correspondences/relations between the source and the target, clarifying how conceptual elements of the source correspond to constituent elements of target (Kövecses, 2010, p. 7). However, researchers have also noted that the mappings between the source and the target are, and can be, only partial, which means only part(s) of the source are mapped onto the target; in other words, only part(s) of the target are involved in the mapping from the source (Cameron, 2003; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010; Steen, 2007). For example, in "AN ARGUMENT IS A JOURNEY" (cited in Kövecses, 2010, p. 92), only the 'progress' of the "argument" is brought into focus; the issue of control over the argument is backgrounded.

2.4.2 A Sociocultural Perspective on Metaphor

2.4.2.1 An Introduction to Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory (hereafter SCT) represents a theory of the development of higher mental functioning such as memory, attention, rational thinking, and learning (Vygotsky, 1978), which draws primarily on the research of Vygotsky and his followers (e.g., Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Wertsch, 1985; Wertsch, 1998), aiming at understanding the complex interaction between the individual and his/her sociocultural milieu. One of the most fundamental concepts of SCT is that a human's mental activities are mediated (Wertsch, 1985); people are incapable of making direct connections with the outside world without links; as a result they rely on material and symbolic mediational tools, which allow them to (a) interact in a dialectical relationship with the world; (b) regulate their behaviours and (c) mediate and regulate their relationship with other people (Wertsch & Tulviste, 1996, p. 60).

2.4.2.2 Metaphor as a Mediational Tool

Vygotsky's claims about mental functioning involve two 'layers' representing elementary and higher mental functions. Unlike the elementary biological functions in the form of simple stimulus–response reflexes, which are largely influenced by environmental circumstances, higher mental functions, such as people's thinking, are not under voluntary control in origin, but are developed and reformulated as a result of participation in socioculturally organised activities and experiences, through various links (Lantolf, 2000). Such links, to use Vygotsky's term, involve 'mediation' accomplished via two means: (a) artifacts, which represent the conceptual forms of the world and empower people to regulate their minds (e.g., spoken and written language) and (b) material objects, which allow

people to control and change their physical behaviour (e.g., "a table exists first in an ideal form in a person's mind, which eventually gives it material shape through the person's actions on a piece of wood", cited in Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 62). In this case, higher forms of human mental activities can be understood as a process, whereby humans increasingly gain voluntary control over, and transform, their forms of thinking (with respect to internal mental processes) by means of a set of mediational tools (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

From Vygotsky's perspective, the mediational tools (including both physical tools and symbolic artifacts) also allow researchers to understand how human social and mental activity is organised (Lantolf, 2000). Such tools are constructed over time and are made available to succeeding generations, which often modify these artifacts before passing them on to future generations (Lantolf, 2000). Language, according to Vygotsky (1978), is the most powerful and pervasive form of mediational means humans deploy for thinking, and has been defined as "the socially evolved meaning of a community, consisting of socio-culturally created signs" (Wertsch & Stone, 1985, p. 171). Metaphor, in particular conceptual metaphor, as part of language used in daily communication (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) is characterised as a sort of socially constructed device, deriving from specific social, cultural and historical circumstances, which not only acts on personal mental functioning in the case of social communication (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Sfard, 1998; Wertsch, 1991), but also allows people to construct and interpret their mental processes as well (e.g., people's concepts and thoughts). That is to say, metaphor is not only incorporated in a mental process but is constitutive of it (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.62). Adopting this view, de Guerrero and Villamil (2002) also argued that metaphor functioned "like other

mediational tools, for intramental use in knowing, meaning making, and even guiding behaviours" (p.7).

SCT thus integrates both the 'cognitive' and the 'social-cultural' aspects to define the mediational function of metaphor in the development of higher mental functioning (Cameron, 1999; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2001).

2.5 Identification of Metaphor

2.5.1 Operationalising Metaphor Identification

The identification of metaphors in a discourse event (e.g., written and spoken discourse) requires researchers to draw a line between metaphorical and non-metaphorical expressions. Two methods designed specifically for metaphor recognition are: the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP), developed by a group of ten metaphor scholars, called the Pragglejaz Group[1] (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) and Metaphor Identification through Vehicle Terms (MIV), introduced by Cameron (2003). Both MIV and MIP approaches focus on metaphors in actual language use (i.e., metaphors in linguistic expressions); both approaches do not deny a link between linguistic expressions and conceptual metaphor, but neither procedure is primarily concerned with relating the identified metaphorically used words to underlying conceptual metaphors (indeed the MIP steps described in the Pragglejaz paper were claimed to be theory-neutral). In addition, the proponents of the two approaches have claimed that not every example of metaphorical language is necessarily conditioned by a metaphor at the conceptual level (Cameron, 2003; Pragglejaz Group, 2007).

In general, the MIP approach "aims to establish, for each lexical unit in a stretch of discourse, whether its use in the particular context can be described as metaphorical" (Pragglejaz Group, 2007, p.2) by (a) examining "whether the word

has one or two basic meanings, which differ markedly from the contextual sense"
(Littlemore & Low, 2006, p. 11) and (b) checking if the contextual meaning of the
word can be understood in comparison with the basic meaning (Kövecses, 2010).
To identify a word/lexical unit as being metaphorically used, the answers to the
last two questions (i.e. (a) and (b)) have to be 'yes'. Although the MIP approach
provides a useful guide for metaphor recognition, there seem to be a number of
specific problem areas. For example, some researchers feel that the criteria for the
'basic meaning' of a lexical unit is rather vague (Steen, et al., 2010a); furthermore,
it remains unclear what counts as the basic meaning if the word's historically
older meaning is less concrete than its contemporary meaning. To resolve the
problem, some researchers have suggested that using a dictionary can be helpful
in checking the basic meaning of lexical units (Steen, et al., 2010b). However, the
use of different dictionaries, as Deignan (2005) noted, might provide inconsistent
answers to a more basic meaning of a word, given the fact that dictionaries are
edited specifically for different target readers. In addition, the segmentation of the
discourse into lexical units may be seen as problematic, since at times it seems
counterintuitive to look separately at lexical units that are clearly connected (Dorst,
2011; Krennmayr, 2011; Pragglejaz Group, 2007). As Krennmayr (2011) pointed
out, for example, in "she launched a counterattack" in the context of arguing, the
words "launch" and "counterattack" can either be treated as one unit of metaphor
or as two separate units, depending on a researcher's approach (p. 32). These
problems are largely resolved (or at least much reduced) by Cameron's
chronologically earlier (2003) MIV approach, which is also designed to set out
how to distinguish linguistic presence of metaphor from non-metaphor in real
contexts of use, but suggests a broader unit of analysis than MIP.

MIV focuses on identifying the presence of a focus term, which following Richards (1936) is called the 'Vehicle' (Cameron, 2003; MetNet, 2006), and examining the connections between the vehicle term and the topic, the latter being the content of the on-going discourse (Cameron, 2003; MetNet, 2006). In other words, if MIP details steps for coding metaphors at the word level, MIV singles out vehicle terms, which may be single words, but could equally be extended phrases or clauses (Cameron, 2003; Steen, et al., 2010a). According to Cameron (2003), two conditions have to be met in order to mark a linguistic metaphor: (a) there is a contrast in meanings between a vehicle word or phrase and the topic domain and (b) there is a connection or transfer of meaning between the vehicle and the topic. For example, when the teacher told a pupil in a dance practice for a May Day celebration "you deserve a medal" (Cameron, 2003, p. 60), the phrase "deserve a medal" can be identified as marking the presence of linguistic metaphor, because, firstly, the more concrete meaning of the vehicle term "deserve a medal" as being given a medal as a result of winning a competition contrasts with what is meant here — the pupil's excellent practice; no actual medals were to be given. Secondly, the phrase can be can be made sense of in the discourse context — a celebration of May Day, rather than a real competition.

2.5.2 Metaphor in Alternative Forms

To some scholars, the use of metaphor is characterised as an indirect use of linguistic form, involving an implicit comparison rather than an explicit comparison—other forms of figurative language, such as simile involving a linguistic marker such as 'like' or 'as' or explicit analogy are by definition not metaphoric (e.g., Glucksberg & Haught, 2006; Todd & Clarke, 1999).

However, the proponents of CMT have argued that if metaphor is defined based on a mapping across two conceptual domains, in which the target domain is understood in terms of the source domain, metaphor does not have to be expressed by indirect language (Steen, 2007). In this case, as Steen (2007) pointed out, other forms of figurative language embodying linguistic manifestation of a metaphorical mapping in conceptual structure, such as simile and analogy can be treated as metaphor.

With reference to the two methods discussed above for metaphor identification (namely, MIP and MIV), MIP identifies metaphorically used words on the basis of indirectness of meaning (Pragglejaz Group, 2007), so it is not designed to identify similes as metaphoric. MIV handles linguistic forms that directly express the source domain of a metaphorical mapping, allowing simile to be viewed as an alternative form of metaphor. For example, as Cameron and Maslen (2010) noted, a simile can be metaphorical (and picked up by MIV), if it can present (a) "the basic and contextual meanings of vehicle terms to contrast or to be incongruous" (p. 110) and (b) a transfer of meaning between the vehicle and contextual topic, which, in turn, can be used to help one understand the topic. For example, in the following expression "he is like a whirlwind" (cited in Cameron & Maslen, 2010, p. 110), there is a contrasting meaning between he as 'a male person' and a 'whirlwind' and the expression can help people understand 'he is an impetuously active person'; hence the expression can be marked as a vehicle and classed as a metaphorical simile. To borrow Goatly's (1997) words, the simile is a metaphor that is signalled.

2.5.3 Spontaneous Metaphor and Elicited Metaphor

In general, there are two ways that have commonly been used to collect informants' metaphors. The first approach has to do with the spontaneous use of metaphors (also called spontaneous metaphors); they are collected from analogical statements that arise naturally in conversation or writing, such as interviews and personal narratives. In the second approach, informants also create metaphors via completion of decontextualised researcher-constructed prompts. This type of prompt normally adopts the two-domain structure of a conceptual metaphor, presenting the respondent with an 'X is (like) Y' formulation (e.g., Learning is like…); the results are elicited metaphors.

Collecting elicited metaphor tends to be more straightforward than finding spontaneous metaphor in discourse data, because firstly, the researcher prescribes an explicit 'X is (like) Y' format and informants are clearly asked to create metaphors in their responses; whereas in natural spoken or written discourse a considerable quantity of data is needed to collect enough spontaneous metaphors to work reliably with, as the informants are likely to have little awareness of using metaphors. Secondly, compared with the complexity of coding spontaneous use of metaphor in discourse data, the researcher in an elicited metaphor study has, in most cases, pre-specified the format of the metaphor prompt, and has given the contextual topic (i.e., 'X'); the informants just need to add the vehicle terms (i.e., 'Y'). What the researcher needs to do is to (a) check if the vehicles are metaphorical and (b) exclude any non-metaphorical use (see MIV in section 2.5.1). It has to be pointed that quite a high proportion of the elicited metaphor studies have employed a prompt involving part of a simile in an 'X is like Y' format, for instance, "writing is like…" (in Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005), which means that simile is allowed to be used by the respondents to construct their answers (to be

discussed in 2.7). In this case, to decide if a simile is metaphorical, as noted in section 2.5.2, MIV is more appropriate than MIP.

Although it seems that identifying and collecting elicited metaphors needs relatively less work than dealing with spontaneous metaphors, it does not mean the elicited metaphor technique is methodologically transparent. A few recent studies have started to report unsuccessful answers to this sort of researcher-constructed metaphor elicitation task (e.g., Zapata & Lacorte, 2007). In most cases, this has simply involved noting that in a particular task no answer at all was provided, no metaphor was used, or else no explanatory reasoning was given to explain the metaphor. The problems with using elicitation tasks will be detailed in section 2.7.3.

2.6. An Introduction to Metaphor Analysis

In brief, two approaches are commonly used to analyse both spontaneous metaphors and elicited metaphors in discourse events, namely, grouping linguistic metaphors into conceptual categories (see section 2.6.1) and facilitating the respondents' accounts of choosing specific metaphors to interpret the metaphorical mappings between the vehicle and the topic (see section 2.6.2).

2.6.1 From Linguistic Metaphors to Conceptual Metaphors

An outline general procedure for grouping linguistic metaphors into conceptual categories was developed by Cameron and Low (1999). The essence of the approach is a systematic generalisation of participants' metaphorical language, in order to infer underlying conceptual metaphors, which ultimately provide some insights into participants' thought patterns and understandings of a given topic. This analytical procedure has three steps (also see Cameron & Low, 1999, p.8):

(a) collecting informants' metaphorical linguistic expression (MLE) of the

topic,

(b) generalising from MLEs to the conceptual metaphors they exemplify,

(c) using the results to suggest the understanding or thought patterns

which construct or constrain people's beliefs or actions.

2.6.2 Metaphorical Entailment-oriented Approach

Armstrong (2007) developed, independently of the above, a metaphorical

entailment-oriented approach to the analysis of elicited metaphors (e.g.,

"Academic writing is like…" used in her study). The key feature of her approach

is to determine and examine metaphorical entailments, which are normally

provided by participants regarding the rationale of choosing specific metaphor to

describe the given contextual topics and establish the correspondences between

the vehicle and topic in their metaphors. In Armstrong's view, metaphorical

entailments can be obtained directly from participants by asking them, through

either interviews or written texts. Once a respondent's linguistic phrase is marked

as metaphorically used, for example, "It feels like eating spinach because those

two things I don't like." (cited in Armstrong, 2007, p. 141), she assumed that there

was, in this sort of metaphorical expression, a close match with an underlying

conceptual structure that contains two explicit domains, as in Lakoff and

Johnson's CMT (1980). In other words, the target domain "eating spinach" and

the source domain "academic writing" can be assumed to be identical to what the

respondent stated in the linguistic form of metaphor (i.e., vehicle term= "eating

spinach", elided topic=academic writing).

Based on the informants' accounts at an interview, Armstrong (2007, p. 142) suggested using the cross-domain mappings to interpret the "eating spinach" metaphor (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 Cross-domain Mappings of the "Eating Spinach" Metaphor

- Agent/eater → agent/student-writer
- Type and form of food/spinach → type and form of literacy/academic literacy
- Action/eating spinach → action/writing and reading for school
- Purpose/eating spinach → purpose/required for the writing classes
- Acceptable altered form/spinach dip → acceptable altered form/out-of-school literacies (self-selected reading and writing)

Armstrong's assumption, and the simplification of the analysis stage that it implies, would seem to be just as applicable to the present study. That is to say, there seems no need for the researcher dealing with elicited data in the 'X is Y' format to employ a formal and inevitably complex procedure (such as Steen (1999)'s five-step procedure[2]) for relating specific linguistic forms of metaphor in discourse to underlying conceptual structures.

2.6.3 Limitations of the Two Approaches

The two types of metaphor analysis are limited in several ways. First, with reference to Cameron and Low's three-step analysis, there may be a big difference between researchers regarding grouping linguistic metaphors into relevant conceptual categories (i.e. step (b)), although Steen (1999a) has proposed a five-step method, as a bridge linking the metaphorical expressions with conceptual metaphors in discourse data.

For both methods of metaphor analysis, it seems problematic to simply assume that individuals are 100% guided in their actions by the thought patterns and understandings that are inferable from their metaphorical language; it is likely that their metaphorical accounts will be "partial and/or conflicting" (Cameron & Low, 1999, p. 88). Therefore, to resolve the problem of the validity of either method, one possible solution, as discussed in section 2.2.1, is to adopt triangulatory research strategies, examining the relationship between people's beliefs and actions through different sources of data, for example, adding an observational component to the data collection methods (Cortazzi, 1993). Second, the researcher cannot make assumptions that his/her interpretations of the participants' metaphoric language are accurate depictions of their original meaning. Therefore, adopting a post-hoc technique (e.g., interviews) that provides an opportunity for discussion about the meaning of the metaphors, between the researcher and the participants, can be useful in reducing serious discrepancy between the researcher's interpretation and participants' intended meanings of their metaphors.

2.7 The Application of Metaphor Analysis in Language Education

2.7.1 Metaphor Analysis in Language Education

The use of metaphor is not new to the field of education. Educational concepts and processes have long been described in metaphorical terms either as single 'X is Y' metaphors or as clusters of metaphors (Low, 2008, p. 213). In the last few decades, it has become reasonably common in applied linguistics and teacher training research to examine teachers' and students' understandings /conceptualisations of teaching and/or learning (e.g., Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Ellis, 1999, 2001; Kramsch, 2003; Oxford et al., 1998; Woodward, 1991; Zapata &

Lacorte, 2007). Quite a high proportion of these studies have collected informants'

elicited metaphors by completing researcher-constructed prompts involving part

of a metaphor or simile in the 'X is (like) Y' format, for instance, "Learning is

(like)… ". Some studies (such as Jin & Cortazzi, 2011; Saban et al., 2007) further

ask respondents to justify their metaphorical reasoning (i.e. "X is (like) Y

because…") in order to try to interpret the (metaphorical) language in terms of

their personal thinking or beliefs. This paradigm has been used to investigate:

(a) students' and teachers' general conceptualisations of teaching and

learning, using prompts such as "Teaching is (like)…", or "A good

English teacher is…"(Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2002;

Wan, Low & Li, 2011);

(b) specific language skills, such as writing and reading, via prompts like

"Writing is like…" (Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005) and "College

reading/writing is like…"(Hart, 2009; Paulson & Armstrong, 2011; Wan,

2007);

(c) pre/in-service teacher training needs or effectiveness, using prompts

such as "An English classroom is (like)…" and "A teacher/learner is

(like)…" (Zapata & Lacorte, 2007);

The majority of these studies employ some version of CMT and/or SCT

(see section 2.4), and argue that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life with the

central claim that metaphor should be seen not as language, but rather as a

conceptual phenomenon and specifically as a transfer of information from a

source domain 'Y' (e.g., eating) to a target domain 'X' (e.g., learning).

As noted in section 2.6, in general, the data analysis follows Cameron and

Low's three-step analytical procedure involving systematic generalisation by the

analysts from participants' linguistic metaphors to infer a suggested conceptual

metaphor, and providing some insights into participants' conceptualisations of concepts like teaching and learning.

For example, in Cortazzi and Jin's study (1999) of educational metaphors, they explored how UK primary teachers' metaphors of "A good teacher is…." and "learning is like…" could contrast with metaphors elicited from postgraduate and undergraduate students from England, China, Turkey, Lebanon and Iran. Their findings suggested that there were many consistencies across the participant groups in how students and teachers conceptualised teaching and/or learning. For example, there were significant cultural gaps, which needed to be bridged when Chinese students required help from British teachers. While Chinese students expected teachers to be more sensitive to their needs and offer help without students having to ask (e.g., teacher as parent or friend), British teachers expected students to be more independent, assuming that students who do not ask questions had no problems. To remedy the misunderstandings, Cortazzi and Jin (1999) claimed that being acquainted with differing metaphors of teaching and learning was particularly important for all participants in inter-cultural contexts. In addition, the data from the undergraduate students revealed that students' metaphors seemed to change over time, suggesting that the metaphors were reflecting their learning.

Concerning the limitations of the research design, there are at least three problems that needs to be paid attention to. Firstly, the consistency of the data and comparisons across groups are called into question due to (a) inconsistent data collection over a long period of time from the late 1980s to 1995 and (b) the fact that spontaneous and elicited metaphors were conflated; so that it remains unclear which aspects of the findings are derived from spontaneous metaphor or elicited metaphors. Secondly, having no observational component to the data collection

methods, it seems problematic to simply assume that participants were guided in their teaching and/or learning practices purely by the thought patterns and understandings that were inferred from their metaphors. Thirdly, it is unclear whether the researchers' interpretations are consistent with participants' intended meanings. To improve the validity of the research, observing participants' actual performance, as well as using a post-hoc technique, such as follow-up interviews with participants regarding their original meaning of their metaphors, are needed.

2.7.2 Use of Metaphor in Writing Studies

Despite the fact that numerous studies in the last two decades have investigated participants' metaphors about teaching and/or learning, very few to date have begun to examine participants' specific language skills, such as academic writing (examples that do, include, Armstrong, 2007, 2011; Hart, 2009; Tomlinson, 1986; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005; Wan, 2007). Also, there seems to be little published work about investigating the relationship between writers' conceptualisations and their actual writing practices.

Adapting a narrative approach, Tomlinson (1986) represents one of the first attempts to investigate how L1 professional writers talk about their composing. Drawing on comments from over 2,000 published interviews, four metaphorical writing stories were selected in which writers compared their composing with other processes: WRITING IS COOKING; WRITING IS MINING; WRITING IS GARDENING AND WRITING IS HUNTING. These metaphors demonstrated the diversity of writers' views about composing, emphasising and suppressing different aspects of the writing process.

There are four points, which can be usefully made here. Firstly, the data collection method is unclear; specifically, how these metaphorical stories were

identified from the 2,000 published interviews. Secondly, the study did not make it explicit why these writing stories were categorised only in terms of the four metaphorical categories (i.e., cooking, mining, hunting and gardening). Thirdly, the findings seem to rely heavily on the researcher's personal interpretations, inasmuch as there were no follow-up studies to examine if the researcher's interpretations of the metaphorical statements were consistent with the writers' original meanings. Additionally, it is unclear which type of writing these professional writers were talking about, so how far the salient features of the act of writing inferred from these metaphorical stories can apply to writing in other disciplines remains unknown.

More relevant to the present focus of interest, using metaphor analysis methodology, Armstrong (2007) examined first-year college students' conceptualisations of writing and whether those conceptualisations changed over the course of their experiences in a writing course that combined developmental reading and basic writing strategies. Data sources included sequenced semi-structured interviews, observations of classroom peer-group work, and participants' required course writing assignments. The data extracted from these sources included participants' elicited and spontaneously generated metaphors about their academic writing. Eight students were interviewed and observed with respect to their writing and writing processes over the course of an academic term. The data suggested a great variety of students' conceptualisations of writing. A significant finding was that some of the students equated the process of writing with emotion. As Armstrong indicated, three of the participants responded to the metaphor prompt "Writing is like…" "with a completion that implicitly began 'writing feels like…'" (p.18); while other participants, those who were more confident about their writing abilities, provided responses that "indicated that they

were thinking deeply about their writing approach, rationale, and process" (p. 15). This finding shows that not only can students' metaphors allow researchers access to students' conceptualisations, or the ways they think, but to how much they are thinking about, in this case, their writing processes, and even learning in general. One conclusion from this research was that that by learning more about students' conceptualisations through metaphor analysis, educators could better understand how to direct their instructional strategies in order to most effectively meet the perceived needs of the students themselves.

Villamil and de Guerrero (2005) also looked at metaphorical conceptualisations of writing. However, whereas Tomlinson (1986) and Armstrong (2007) focused on L1 writers, Villamil and de Guerrero (2005) studied the construction of theoretical notions of learning and teaching of ESL writing among a group of ten Brazilian MATESOL student teachers enrolled on a 15-week graduate course on writing theories via two metaphor elicitation tasks "An ESL writer is like. . ." and "An ESL writing teacher is like. . ." (p. 81). Halfway through the course, participants were encouraged to share and discuss their initial individual metaphors with classmates. At the end of the course, they submitted an overall evaluation report, which covered the original process of conceptualisation via metaphors and the later peer-discussion at the end of the course. At a general level, Villamil and de Guerrero concluded that metaphorical conceptualisation was helpful in facilitating understanding of the relationship between ESL writers and teachers by linking different conceptual domains. More importantly, the data also suggested that sharing metaphors with peers served to broaden participants' writing knowledge, allowing them to reformulate plans to change their writing.

Villamil and de Guerrero's study offered some useful insights into the use of metaphor analysis in writing, but it was also limited in several ways. Firstly,

although the results showed that participants modified and/or made adjustments to their conceptions of writing; it was not clear what caused these changes; personal conceptualisation of writing through metaphor, group discussion of personal metaphors, or both. To establish more clearly the causes of changes, it is, as stated above, important to check with participants. Secondly, although the study is one of few metaphor studies to investigate the impact of metaphor-based interaction (i.e., group discussion of individuals' personal metaphors) on individuals' writing and the results revealed participants' intentions to modify and/or change their writing, no relevant evidence was provided to demonstrate whether and how far participants implemented the changes in their writing. Therefore, a post-hoc technique, such as follow-up interviews with participants, is needed.

2.7.3 Problems with Using Metaphor Elicitation Tasks

For the analysis of elicited metaphors to be successful, it is crucial that the researcher-constructed prompts which facilitate the production of metaphors, or elicit metaphorical statements, genuinely reflect participants' conceptualisations. In other words, if the prompts impede production, the data collection method will not work.

A few recent metaphor-analysis studies have given some information about the frequency of unsuccessful responses and have indicated that encouraging informants to become more metacognitively aware of the metaphors they use to describe their thoughts or concepts has proven problematic. The exclusion criteria for invalid responses normally involve three aspects: "no mention of a metaphor, no provision of a rationale (i.e., no explanation after 'because…') and (cannot be) placed under a recognisable conceptual theme" (e.g.,

Goldstein, 2005; Saban et al., 2007; Saban, 2010; Wan, 2011; Zapata & Lacorte, 2007).

For instance, McGrath (2006), researching Brazilian language teachers' conceptualisations, reported excluding 40/248 (16%) of responses to "A course book is …", where 16 of the 40 gave non-metaphoric answers. In Wan's small-scale study (2007) about metaphorical accounts of EFL writing amongst a group of Chinese English-major students, two out of 31 (around 6%) failed to create a metaphor/simile, when given the prompt "Writing is like…, because…". Task failure was also partially quantified in Zapata and Lacorte's (2007) study on learning and teaching. They reported that 5 out of 69 (14%) participants did not provide answers to "An L2 language teacher is like/is…" and/or "An L2 student is like/is …". Analysis of two other elicitation tasks had to be abandoned, as 14 out of 69 (20%) respondents did not or could not answer appropriately the prompts for "An L2 classroom is like/is…" or "Learning a L2 entails/can be defined as…" (cited in Todd & Low, 2010, p. 31). Similarly, in two studies relating to Turkish trainee teachers' concepts of teaching (2007) and learning (2010), Saban and his colleagues had to exclude 5–10% as poorly structured answers to the prompts "A teacher is like…because…'' (145/1367 answers excluded) and "A learner is like …." (137/2847 answers excluded). Responses were excluded because (a) no answer at all was provided, (b) no metaphor was used, (c) no explanation for selecting metaphors was given or (d) the metaphor could not be placed under a recognisable conceptual theme; unfortunately no precise figures were reported for the four separate categories. In addition, Strugielska (2008) repeatedly found that developing an elicited metaphor could be a challenge for some of her Polish undergraduates, when they were asked to conceptualise educational practices via five metaphor prompts: "The teacher is (like)…, because…", "Teaching is

(like)…because…", "The learner is (like)… because…", "Learning is (like)…because…" and "The classroom is (like)…because…". Four of the 24 participants (17%) in the first group and three of the 21 participants (13%) in the second group had serious problems in constructing personal metaphors. It may accordingly be tentatively concluded that the rate of failure ranges fairly regularly from around 6% up to around 20%, which would seem to be fairly high for a data collection technique.

Nevertheless, in general, it remains the case that few published metaphorical conceptualisation papers discuss in any real detail or depth the validity of the method used; indeed, a considerable number do not discuss methodological problems at all. The very fact that invalid responses have been periodically reported suggests that one cannot simply assume that the use of 'thinking of a metaphor/simile' technique to examine informants' conceptualisations, at least in the context of researching educational practices, is unproblematic or methodologically transparent (Todd & Low, 2010, p.31). What is needed is an understanding of where and why the problems occur, plus an investigation of possible solutions.

Davis (2009) is one of very few studies that has investigated participants' difficulties with the metaphor elicitation task. In his study of the metaphorical conceptualisations of reading of 15 American junior/senior high school students and four teachers in two separate scripted reading intervention environments, Davis repeatedly found unsuccessful responses to the prompt "Reading is like…". As with earlier studies, the unsuccessful responses were defined as those which had no answer at all, no metaphor, or no explanation. The follow-up interviews with participants suggested two reasons for the lack of success. These were, firstly, unfamiliarity with metaphor, and secondly, misinterpretation of the word 'like',

treating it not as a comparison marker, but as a hedge or hesitation device, as in "Reading is, like, complicated" (p.205). Interestingly, Davis considered this latter factor as a major cause of non-metaphorical statements. To help participants who had problems with creating metaphors, Davis tried providing participants with examples. However, it looks as though his preselected examples did not completely remedy the situation. He found that a large proportion of the participants who lacked knowledge of metaphor were still not able to create and then explain a metaphor, even after the examples had been given (p.205). Unfortunately, Davis did not supply any additional support beyond the examples. Despite the fact that it did not really explore ways to resolve the problems with the metaphor elicitation task, Davis (2009) nevertheless remains one of the few studies to report reasons for task failure/difficulty and to attempt to supply participants with some methodological help. The conclusions I draw are that follow-up interviews can help, as a form of stimulated recall (Gass & Mackey, 2000; Mackey & Gass, 2005), but that more research is needed to explore techniques that actually help participants think metaphorically and complete the task. More research on examining the underlying causes of the difficulties in producing metaphors 'on request' is thus needed.

2.7.4 Use of Metaphor in Critical Thinking

Apart from the function of metaphor in investigating participants' conceptualisations of teaching and/or learning, very few studies have begun to explore the relationship between metaphorical awareness and critical thinking (exceptions being Jones, 2006; Littlemore, 2004). Nevertheless, the results of these few studies do suggest that metaphor can be a vehicle for promoting participants' critical thinking[3]. For example, through comparing two groups of

ESL MA students, Littlemore (2004) found that students in the group, which had been given a metaphorical awareness-raising session, showed a higher level of critical evaluation of the given texts. Jones's (2006) study is concerned with designing a set of metaphorical thinking activities, where participants were expected to conceptualise several concepts through metaphors, including dialogical reasoning, argument, persuasion, inquiry, integration of teaching/learning, and teaching strategies, for example "learning is…" or "an argument is…". As with Littlemore (2004), she emphasised the importance of a metaphoric awareness-raising session, namely, acquainting learners with the concept of metaphor. Based on the premise that the metaphorical thinking process involved finding and using a known experience to understand an unknown phenomenon (also see Dirks, 1998), she assumed that the activities could serve to foster personal self-reflection and critical thinking among both new and experienced language teachers, as well as their students. As her study was programmatic and did not involve the analysis of the empirical data, it remains unclear whether and how far her expectations about these metaphorical thinking activities can be achieved. Clearly, neither of the two studies offered an explanation for why metaphor-related activities may have promoted participants' critical thinking in great detail. More empirical research is thus needed.

2.7.5 Educational Metaphors with Multiple Layers

Hart (2009) pointed out that there are multiple layers of educational metaphors at work in a given classroom at a given moment (Hart, 2009, p. 21). These metaphors can be from culturally-based common sense, professionals (i.e., theorists and researchers), teacher trainers, textbooks, teachers or students. Within a given culture, as Low (1999) noted, metaphors used by other groups influence

those used by the group being studied and vice versa. However, some groups are more likely to be influential than others, given their status and the power and authority they wield. The textbook, for instance, may affect teachers and students; teachers may influence their students.

It can be argued that each individual in an educational group (e.g., a teacher or a student) is likely to experience various metaphors. Therefore, forming a relatively complete understanding of why and how an individual chooses certain metaphors to conceptualise teaching and/or learning in an educational setting necessarily involves researching metaphors from different sources or at various levels.

2.7.6 The Lack of Discussion of Metaphor as a Mediational Tool in Group Discussions

During the last few decades, the use of metaphor in educational settings has often been one-way: collecting, categorising, interpreting and reporting on metaphors from students and/or teachers, without allowing participants to share their metaphors or to learn from each other. This kind of metaphor interaction has proved to be important in metaphor studies involving stakeholders from a homogeneous social context (e.g., Oxford et al., 1998; Hart, 2009; Wan, Low & Li, 2011). For example, Oxford et al. (1998) called for the 'two-way' use of metaphor by adding metaphor-based group discussion. Their study explored the metaphors employed by students and teachers to talk about their conceptions of teachers and teaching. Metaphor was proposed as a useful mediational tool in group discussions, explicating the conceptions of teaching and teaching from both students' and teachers' perspectives, which ultimately tackle the unrecognized differences between students' and teachers' conceptions. Oxford and her

colleagues suggested that by considering various metaphors and underlying beliefs about teaching, metaphor-based group discussion between teachers and students could (a) increase and widen participants' awareness (of classroom events, style conflicts, and instructional methods), (b) facilitate self-reflection on individual assumptions about teaching, and (c) assist students' understanding of teachers' positions in such a way as might lead to productive change in inter-group relationships, particularly between students and teachers in the classroom.

Hart (2009) is one of the few studies (with Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005) to investigate the effects of sharing and discussing metaphors for beliefs, in this case about writing, by students and teachers in a university writing class. Based on Oxford et al.'s (1998) assumptions regarding the functions of metaphor-based classroom interaction, they argued (and found) that discussing metaphorical conceptualisations of writing was a useful pedagogical tool, bringing students and teachers to a better understanding of each other's positions, allowing teachers to resolve conflicts and even leading to changes in individual views of writing (Hart, 2009, p. 276).

Both Oxford et al. (1998) and Hart (2009) have called for the investigation of the mediational function of metaphor in finding contradictions, and fostering change in educational beliefs and practices in the form of group discussions; yet this remains an underrepresented area in metaphor research. In particular, very few studies of metaphorical conceptualisation have examined the impacts of sharing and discussing personal metaphors of writing on individuals' writing development. Therefore, it would be of value to investigate (a) what happens when students enter a discussion about their personal metaphors and (b) how far and in what ways an individual's writing can be influenced.

2.8 Summary

Empirical studies have suggested that learners' conceptualisations of specific learning tasks have considerably affected the effort they have made in, and the outcomes of their learning. One way to gain a better understanding of learning behaviours is to investigate learners' conceptualisations of specific learning activities. Metaphor analysis has been found to be an effective way to enable researchers to do this.

Both CMT and SCT provide a theoretical framework for the use of metaphor analysis to investigate participants' conceptualisations of tasks or topics. Metaphor is regarded as expressing and understanding one object (i.e., the target) in terms of another (i.e., the source). To be more specific, metaphor is a set of partial mappings from a generally concrete source domain onto a generally more abstract target domain, which means that the mapping involves a set of correspondences between the two domains.

The mediational function of metaphor in investigating people's conceptualisations has commonly been used in language and education with varying degrees of success to investigate language teachers' and learners' understandings of teaching and/or learning. At a general level, metaphor analysis is a systematic generalisation by the analysts from participants' metaphorical language, in order to infer underlying conceptual metaphors that ultimately provide some insights into participants' thought patterns and understandings of a given topic. Informants' metaphors are spontaneously generated from conversation or writing or elicited via the completion of researcher-constructed prompts involving thinking of a conceptual metaphor in what is often called an 'X is (like) Y' structure.

Quite a high proportion of metaphor studies have examined participants' elicited metaphors to investigate their conceptualisations of teaching and learning, but very few have also explored participants' specific language skills, such as writing. In addition, the way that metaphor has been built into most studies has rarely allowed participants to share and discuss their metaphors. Therefore, there has been little investigation of the mediational function of metaphor in the form of group discussions as well as the impact of the discussion of individuals' metaphors on   related personal behaviours. Methodologically, although a few recent studies have reported the proportion of unsuccessful answers to sets of metaphor elicitation tasks and identified a number of issues connected with task difficulty, there appears to be little published work that has seriously addressed the validity of the method used. The moral is that educational studies involving metaphor need to tackle validation more seriously.

Notes to Chapter Two

[1] The name Pragglejaz Group is coined after the initials of the first names of the ten scholars involved: **P**eter Crisp, **R**ay Gibbs, **A**lan Cienki, **G**erard Steen, **G**raham Low, **L**ynne Cameron, **E**lena Semino, **J**oseph Grady, **A**lice Deignan, and **Z**oltán Kövecses.

[2] Steen's five-step procedure (1999) involves (a) identification of metaphor related words, (b) identification of metaphor related propositions, (c) identification of open metaphorical comparison, (d) identification of analogical structure and (e) identification of cross-domain mapping. This procedure offers an analytical technique for the identification of conceptual structures of metaphor in discourse, allowing the researcher to determine the metaphorical mapping between two conceptual structures.

[3] The complexity of critical thinking makes it an elusive concept to define. The present study adopted Siegel's (1992) dual component theory of critical thinking, which refers to the ability to assess beliefs and actions and the reasons underlying them, and 'critical spirit', involving placing a positive value on the reason assessment process and having a desire to employ it (cited in Tian & Low, 2011, p. 4).

Chapter Three: A Preliminary study

3.1 Preamble

The review of metaphor studies in chapter two suggested (see section 2.7.3) that metaphor elicitation tasks, particular in the 'X is Y' format were not unproblematic or methodologically transparent. The topic has largely been ignored in both methods and results sections of published metaphor studies, although a few recent studies have reported the failure rates. The review also suggested that very few studies investigated the reasons for task failure. Finding at least a partial answer to this question needed to be undertaken before one could establish the 'best' metaphor elicitation task for the main study. It was therefore decided to set up a small methodological preliminary study.

This chapter describes a preliminary study conducted at an early stage of the research. Section 3.2 illustrates the contents and aims of the study. Section 3.3 describes the participants, followed by a discussion of the instrumentation, the administration and the evaluation of task completion, which are set out in sections 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6. Sections 3.7 and 3.8 focus on the results, including the task completion, task difficulties and revisions to the task to be used in the main study. Section 3.9 revisits the key findings of the study and discusses the implications for the main study. Finally, section 3.10 summarises the main points made in the study.

3.2 Aims of the Preliminary Study

The aims of the study were (a) to examine how participants responded to a range of writing-related metaphor prompts and (b) obtain their explanations and reasons for any instances of task difficulty/failure in more detail than Davis (2009) had

reported. The task format which led to the most successful answers could be then adopted in the main study in order to enhance the quality of the main study.

3.3. Participants

In October 2008, I emailed all MA students in the Department of Education at the University a 'Letter of Consent for Students' in English. Seventeen Chinese MA students replied to me and signed the consent form (Appendix 1) indicating voluntary participation. All were females and had first degrees in language and/or education.

The consent form allowed students' writing and/or responses to be used as publishable data from the study. Participants were informed that only my supervisors and myself would have access to the data, although it might be employed in follow-up studies. They were also told that all references to them or their data would employ pseudonyms.

3.4 Instrumentation

Three types of metaphor prompt were designed (see Appendix 2), asking for a metaphor without prescribed structure; constructing an 'X is (like) Y' metaphor; and extending an 'X is (like) Y' format, either in the form of a conditional ("If X was like Y…") or an as-simile ("X is as Y as Z"), as follows:

Task 1: Please choose which you think is an appropriate metaphor to explore your experiences or feelings about writing for academic purposes (i.e., academic writing).

Task 2: Writing diaries is…because…

Writing diaries is like…because…

Task 3: If writing an assignment is…, then…, because…

Writing an assignment is as…as…, because…

The three sets of written tasks were given in English. In all cases, participants were asked to give their metaphors and offer an explanation for choosing specific metaphor(s) by completing a "because…" statement in either English or Chinese or both. Three themes were selected that would be familiar to them: academic writing, writing an assignment and writing a diary[1]. Two Chinese PhD students from the Department of Education were invited to review the metaphor prompts, plus the task instructions. Minor wording changes were made in the instructions according to their suggestions.

3.5 Administration

In theory, an instrument needs to be repiloted until no further revision is needed (Gorard, 2001, p. 130); however, in this case, as all individual sessions were arranged at the participants' convenience, there was simply not enough time to have unlimited repiloting. A compromise was therefore adopted, namely, that of piloting the instrument (i.e., the metaphor elicitation tasks) twice. Eight students took part in Phase 1 in late November 2008, while the other nine took part in Phase 2 in early December 2008. In both phases, participants were asked to complete the metaphor prompt(s) first and then to attend individual follow-up interviews on the same day. All interviews were audio-recorded.

The eight participants in Phase 1 were randomly divided into 'Metaphor' and 'Simile' groups (hereafter MG and SG). Each participant was given Task 1

plus two more metaphor/simile prompts: one from Task 2 and one from Task 3. At the end of each task, participants were asked to leave comments, if they felt anything was difficult, by answering the following two questions:

1. If you have any problems or difficulties in producing a metaphor, please try to explain the problem.

2. If you want to add any comments to explain your reactions to the task, please do so.

Based on participants' comments in Phase 1, a revised task (to be discussed in section 3.7.3) was administered to the other nine students in Phase 2, where again comments on task problems/difficulties were requested.

3.6 Evaluation of Task Completion

As noted in section 2.7.3, a successful response to the metaphor elicitation tasks was considered to the follow two quality assessment criteria: (1) whether it used metaphor to conceptualise the given topic(s) and (2) whether it provided an explanation after the 'because…', which explained the informants' intended meaning of their metaphors. To decide if a response is metaphorical, the study used the MIV approach (see section 2.5.3). Any response was regarded as a failure if it did not meet either criterion.

3.7 Phase 1: Results

3.7.1 Participants' Written Responses in Phase 1

All eight participants completed the three tasks in English within half an hour. Their responses to the three tasks are set out in Tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3. It should be pointed out that the answers shown are the participants' original words. Metaphors are bolded and underlined. The type of omission is also bolded.

Table 3.1 Phase 1: Participants' Answers to Task 1

Students	Task 1: Choose which you think is an appropriate metaphor to explore your experiences or feelings about writing for academic purposes.
Kate (SG)	Academic writing is like learning a foreign language.
Zoe (SG)	Academic writing is to **give birth to a baby,** which is full of hope and expectations but unexpected and struggling. For writing, the most exciting moment is to have an inspiration. Most of the time, it is suffering. I have to strictly follow rules with respect to vocabulary and structure. It also likes **squeezing the last bit toothpaste out** especially when I had difficulty in organizing my critical comments to other views.
Sam (SG)	Academic writing is difficult, and I will have to think hard.
Lily (SG)	NO ANSWER
Candy (MG)	Writing an academic essay is like **taking part in a cooking competition**; because the final product will be judged by quite a lot of rules. For example, you will lose marks if it is too salty.
Xena (MG)	Academic writing is like **seizing the inspiration of the mind after reading a story or a paper.** Once the inspiration emerges, a flow of thoughts goes quickly. Writing sometimes like **cooking.** Rice, vegetables and nuts are materials. Recipes are references.
Yasu (MG)	Academic writing is difficult.
Wendy (MG)	Writing is like **journey**, because there are so many roads in front of you, but you have no idea to choose which. Even in the case that you already had many maps of directions for assisting, but they seem to make me more confused. It is similar to finding supporting evidences.

Table 3.2 Phase 1: Participants' Answers to Task 2

Students	T2: Writing diaries is like/as ….(SG) Writing diaries is…because…(MG)
Kate (SG)	**speaking to yourself** **by writing your ideas down;** because diary can keep thoughts private, which we do not want to share with anybody else.
Zoe (SG)	NO ANSWER
Sam (SG)	**taking notes of life;** because it can refresh people's memories.
Lily (SG)	**Autobiography,** because you describe everything happened in your life including happiness and sadness and some special moments.
Candy (MG)	to **sort out ideas** because you experience quite a lot every day. Diary is used to classify these things and make your mental space clear and tidy.
Xena (MG)	to **talk to myself**; because I write down my thoughts which I never expose to others. Only at this time, I can see myself clearly.
Yasu (MG)	to **talk to myself** because it offers me opportunities to reflect on my life and re-examine the special moments.
Wendy (MG)	Writing diaries is a good way of **recording thinking** because when you write some ideas; your brain starts running, some unexplored imagination and feelings would come out. Diary can record them, making your instant ideas vivid and long-lasting.

Table 3.3 Phase 1: Participants' Answers to Task 3

Students	T3: Writing assignments is as…as…because…(SG) If writing assignments is…, then…, because…(MG)
Kate (SG)	NO ANSWER
Zoe (SG)	as **complicated as assembling a clock**.
Sam (SG)	as same as **playing basketball;** so if you want to have good performance, you will have to do lots of practices to improve your skills.
Lily (SG)	as **taking care of a little tree;** because I need pay attention to the arguments and choose appropriate evidences to support my views.
Candy (MG)	a **fierce completion** full of rules and consideration, then writing diary is to **relax myself** because I can freely write anything without too much consideration about the rules.
Xena (MG)	NO ANSWER
Yasu (MG)	NO ANSWER
Wendy (MG)	**Cultivation** then we should seek for high quality seeds and take care of them in that we can get fruitful outcome.

Based on the two criteria for evaluating a successful response to the metaphor elicitation tasks (see section 3.6), of the eight people in Phase 1, only two (Candy and Wendy) completed all three tasks. The other six failed at least one of the three tasks, putting no answer at all, a non-metaphorical statement, or an inappropriate (or no) statement after "because…" (see Tables 3.4 & 3.5 below).

Table 3.4 Assessment of Simile Group's Written Responses to Tasks 1-3

Tasks / Students	T1: Choose which you think is an appropriate metaphor to explore your conceptions about writing for academic purposes	T2: Writing diaries is like….	T3: Writing an assignment is as…as…because …
Kate	No Entailment	✓	No Answer
Zoe	✓	No Answer	No Entailment
Sam	No Metaphor	✓	✓
Lily	No Answer	✓	Inappropriate Entailment

Note: '✓' indicates a successful answer

Table 3.5 Assessment of metaphor Group's Written Responses to Tasks 1-3

Tasks / Students	T1: Choose which you think is an appropriate metaphor to explore your conceptions about writing for academic purposes.	T2: Writing diaries is…because…	T3: If writing an assignment is…, then…, because…
Candy	✓	✓	✓
Xena	✓	✓	No Answer
Yasu	No Metaphor	✓	No Answer
Wendy	✓	✓	✓

Note: '✓' indicates a successful answer

Non-metaphorical statement

Following the MIV approach, I marked Sam's (SG) response to Task 1 as unsuccessful because no vehicle term could be identified in her statements and she just simply stated her view:

> Writing for academic purposes means you must use accurate words, sensible structure and adequate evidences to support your opinion. These

evidences mostly are from paraphrasing and referencing other people

works (Sam, Task 1, orig. words).

No answer

Five out of eight respondents left task(s) blank. In SG, Kate, Zoe and Lily gave no

responses to T3, T2 and T1, respectively. In MG, Yasu and Xena did not answer

T3.

Inappropriate (or no) metaphorical statement after the 'because…'

Three out of the eight respondents failed to provide metaphorical reasoning. In SG,

neither Kate nor Zoe offered explanations as to why "learning a foreign language"

or "assembling a clock" were selected in Tasks 1 and 3. Although Lily offered the

reason "taking care of a little tree" in terms of her "writing assignment" metaphor

to answer Task 3, her follow-up explanation "I need to pay attention to the

arguments and choose appropriate evidence to support my views" (Lily, orig.

wording) seemed to bear no relation to "taking care of a little tree" and it was

therefore decided to treat it as an unsuccessful response.

It should be pointed out that the language of some responses took the form

of metonymy, for instance, "Writing diaries is a good way of recording thinking"

(Wendy) and "writing diaries is like autobiography" (Lily). As discussed in

section 2.5.2, if metaphor is defined as a cross-domain mapping in a conceptual

structure, it does not have to be expressed by indirect language. Thus, other forms

of figurative language, such as simile and metonymy can be viewed as alternative

forms of metaphor, displaying a mapping across two domains in a conceptual

structure. In addition, the aim of the present study was not to examine the

structure of metaphorical expressions, namely, distinguishing metaphor from other forms of figurative language; the focus was on the analysis of metaphorical correspondences between the source and the target. Therefore, other forms of figurative language such as simile and metonymy were not treated as a separate category from metaphor, if the participants made their metaphorical reasoning about the target topic explicit. For example, both Wendy and Lily's statements offered a clear explanation for the metaphorical correspondences between the target "writing diaries" and the sources, such as "autobiography" and "recording thinking", allowing people to make sense of their concepts about "writing diaries"; therefore their answers were considered to be valid.

3.7.2 Participants' Comments on Task Difficulties in Phase 1

Based on what participants reported at their follow-up interviews, there appeared to be four problems underlying the failure to complete the metaphor elicitation tasks successfully.

Firstly, a lack of basic knowledge of metaphor seemed to be a serious problem for Sam, Lily and Yasu. The three participants reported at their follow-up interviews that they did not know what metaphor was nor why it was needed to describe their writing experiences, and it was this that had blocked their thinking.

Secondly, two of the three (Yasu and Sam) somehow could not make sense of the topic "writing for academic purposes", and so they did not mention anything about academic writing in their answers (see Endnote 1).

The third problem related to the request for a single metaphor. Two participants (Kate and Yasu) struggled to find a single concrete image to cover all features of "academic writing" and therefore failed to create a metaphor at all (Yasu), or to give an explanation for her metaphor (Kate).

The fourth problem resulted from the task format. Zoe indicated a degree of reluctance with the word *like* in Task 2, not because she saw it as a hesitation marker like Davis's (2009) respondents (see section 2.7.3), but because it forced her to "think of a set phrase that must involve *like*" (Zoe, orig. words). Additionally, the logical or conceptual complexity of the Task 3 prompts made them hard to complete for five people (Zoe, Kate, Xena, Yasu and Lily). To meet the extra hypothetical or comparison requirements, they appeared to have diverted their attention, focusing too much on completing "then…" or "…as…as…" rather than on looking for appropriate metaphors to describe the target topic. As Lily commented, "In 'writing an assignment is as … as…' task, it's too tough to relate writing to two other items and the two items must be interrelated" (Lily, orig. words).

3.7.3 Reconstructions of Tasks

It was decided to employ the wording 'X is (like) Y' in Phase 2 for two reasons. Firstly, it had led to the most successful answers in Phase 1 and secondly, nearly all answers given by the students followed the 'X is (like) Y' format where no prescribed structure was provided. The results generally suggested that participants felt comfortable with the 'X is (like) Y' pattern. Task 3 was not used in Phase 2, as participants reported serious problems with the extra hypothetical and/or comparison conditions, which tended to markedly divert their attention, when they thought of a metaphor to meet the additional requirements.

In the light of participants' comments on task difficulties, a few changes were made to the task. First, Zoe's report that the marker *like* blocked her thinking was clearly at odds with the preferences of most of the others. To solve this problem, I decided that respondents should be free to use *like* if they wished,

rather than being told they had to do so. Because limiting responses to a single metaphor also caused problems for some people, participants were allowed to use more than one metaphor in Phase 2. This would allow them to think through a list of 'X is Y' metaphors. Additionally, a couple of short examples of academic writing were added to the instructions to help clarify the topic.

The revised metaphor prompt was distributed to the other nine students in Phase 2 as follows:

> Please think through a list of possible metaphors in the form of 'X is Y' to describe your experiences or feelings when you cope with academic writing (e.g., essay and assignment). You need to select at least one writing metaphor and justify it by offering an explanation.

3.8 Phase 2: Results

3.8.1 Participants' Written Responses in Phase 2

All nine subjects completed the revised task in English inside fifteen minutes. Their responses are set out in Table 3.6. It should be noted that answers are the participants' original words. Metaphors are bolded and underlined. The type of omission is also bolded.

Applying the two quality assessment criteria (see section 3.6), five out of nine participants completed the task successfully, whilst the other four either created 'non-metaphorical' statements (Jo, Mandy and Tracy), or failed to give an explanation for choosing specific metaphor (Vicky). Their answers also showed that two respondents created more than one metaphor. Teresa, for instance, used both "squeezing the toothpaste out" and "jigsaw games" metaphors to describe writing, while Maggie produced three metaphors about her writing experiences.

This reinforces the suggestion in section 3.7.3 that it is important to allow multiple metaphors to enable some respondents to conceptualise certain topics (also see Spiro et al., 1989).

Table 3.6 Participants' written Responses in Phase 2

Task / Students	Please think through a list of possible metaphors in the form of 'X is Y' to describe your experiences or feelings when you cope with academic writing (e.g., mid-term essay, assignments). You need select at least one writing metaphor and justify it by offering explanations.
Teresa	Writing mid-term assignment is the process of **squeezing the toothpaste out** especially when I tried to repeatedly organise sentences in a sensible and understandable way. It was a bit painful, but after squeezed out, I felt relaxed. It also likes **jigsaw games**, sometimes.
Lonnie	Writing assignment, I feel, is **a process of assemble a car, following the instruction book,** which can help me deeply understand the function of each component. That's why I prefer reading some relevant materials before get writing started because I need some inspiration. Well, in other words, these references could deepen my understandings of the target topics and develop my statement.
Jane	It's like **learning swimming**. It is a bit scary at the beginning and I can imagine how to effectively move in water but not sure whether these can actually work. This is similar to my writing situation at the moment. The most difficult is to get writing started. It's readily to produce outlines. The fact is it might be completely changed half-way writing. Most of your initial ideas become rubbish.
Maggie	This time I was required to summarise an article. First, I read through the whole article as I **observed a picture from different angles**. Then, I organised the entire structure. It was similar to **drawing an outline**. Choosing the appropriate words, sentences was to **select the right colour**.
Jo	The way to compose an essay in UK is different from that in China. Students in China are always given explanation about one topic and some details about how to construct it; while in UK, students need to

	find their original thought and star their arguments critically (**No metaphor**)
Tracy	I firstly read the whole article and underline the key words or sentences. I then summarised each part, and then got the key sentences paraphrased. Finally, I constructed paragraphs around the key sentences (**No metaphor**).
Vicky	Writing an assignment is putting the simplest ideas into the most complicated words (**No 'because…'**).
Anna	Writing an assignment is **creating a recipe**. I had to be creative because customers are awfully hard to please. I often I just run out of ideas; but I go back to hundreds of recipes to get inspiration. For writing, I am keen to produce something creative, rather than repeat what most people normally say. Critical reading, I think, inspires me quite well.
Mandy	Writing an assignment is not an easy job, especially within a short time and be lack of the experiences of writing (**No metaphor**).

3.8.2 Participants' Comments on Task Difficulties in Phase 2

Their comments suggested two reasons for the unsuccessful answers. Firstly, a poor understanding of metaphor was again reported as a major cause for task failure (Jo, Mandy and Tracy). Secondly, four participants (Jo, Vicky, Tracy and Mandy) repeatedly asked a similar question, "Why should metaphor be used to describe our experiences?" (Tracy, orig. words), to that posed by the three participants (Sam, Lily and Yasu) in Phase 1.

3.8.3 The Final Version of the Metaphor Elicitation Task

One change was made to the task instructions, as Jo raised a question regarding the writer-reader relationship, to the effect that she was not clear to whom she was explaining her experience of academic writing. Clarifying the readers' position

could, she thought, help her identify her stance as a writer and then allow her to compose her texts in a way consistent with the readers' informational needs. She added the comment that her explanations of academic writing to her mother and her tutors could be very different. At their follow-up interviews, Teresa and Jane confirmed that the reader's perspective was really important to them too. I accordingly decided to explicitly specify my status as a target reader. The task that was to be used in the main study became:

> I would like to know how you understand academic writing. Please think through a list of possible metaphors in the form of 'X is Y' to describe your experiences or feelings when you cope with academic writing (e.g., mid-term essays and assignments). You need to select at least one writing metaphor and justify it by offering an explanation.

3.9 Discussion and Implications

3.9.1 Difficulties of the Metaphor Elicitation Task

Four reasons for task failure/difficulty may be inferred with reasonable confidence from participants' responses as being:

(a) A limited understanding of metaphor (e.g., Sam, Lily, Jo, Mandy, Tracy and Vicky);

(b) Uncertainty about the topic (Sam and Lily). For Lily, a lack of experience with academic writing led to the task failure. To create an appropriate metaphor, having a clear sense of the topic seems to be a prerequisite.

(c) The logical or conceptual complexity of the researcher-designed prompt. For example, formulation of the task involving a hypothetical "If…" condition, which asked for multiple cross-domain links, in the format "If writing assignments is…, then…, in that/because…" or involved more than one 'as-simile' in the format "Writing an assignment is as…as…because…", seems to have caused distraction, in that participants had to make their metaphors meet extra hypothetical or comparison requirements.

(d) Using markers in the prompts. Interestingly, not all users (i.e., Zoe) felt comfortable with signalling their metaphors by means of "like" or "as", although the results showed that most users had a strong preference for such signals.

Participants' responses suggested that "lack of basic knowledge of metaphor" and "uncertainty about the target topic" seem to be serious problems that are most likely to lead to task failure. Problems deriving from propositions with a hypothetical condition (i.e., if X is Y then Z) and a requirement for more than one '*as*-simile' (i.e., X is as Z as Y…) may be less frequent (indeed, I could not find an example in the published studies), but inasmuch as such a formulation appears to be rarely used in the published studies, the broader incidence of difficulties with them remains unknown.

The finding that the simile format, explicitly flagged by 'like' or 'as', proved harder to complete for one student (Zoe) than the bare 'X is Y' format, was fairly unexpected for two reasons. Firstly, simile is often reported as inviting direct comparisons, and therefore involves a larger radius of potential commonalities than metaphor (Bowdle & Gentner, 2005, p.200). Moreover,

participants' metaphorical statements showed that there was a strong preference of using simile to construct answers when no prompt was given, which clearly suggested that most participants were comfortable with simile. Since the problem of misinterpretating 'like' was also identified in Davis (2009), it would be very interesting to know its incidence in larger samples. In other words, the impact of explicit markers in metaphor elicitation tasks is not self-evident and needs to be further researched.

3.9.2 Implications for the Main Study

The preliminary study suggested several methodological issues in terms of using metaphor elicitation tasks, which needed to be considered for the future main study.

Firstly, as there is substantial evidence that participants did not/could not understand metaphor appropriately, a working definition to be provided to participants is needed in any research exercise. Understanding metaphor appropriately can be seen as involving two levels: metaphor as a purely linguistic device, and metaphor as a cognitive mechanism for conceptualisation. Clearly, in metaphor conceptualisation studies, a series of metaphor elicitation tasks focus on the function of metaphor at a cognitive level, and inferences are drawn from the metaphors about how people think. However, the results of the preliminary study showed that the cognitive use of metaphor was not easily available to people who lacked a basic knowledge of this field (e.g., Sam, Lily, Jo, Mandy, Tracy and Vicky). Questions like 'why bother to use metaphor?' and 'Why is metaphor needed?' were raised. Therefore, to complete the metaphor elicitation task, it would seem to be of great importance to help participants (a) establish a working

definition of metaphor at both linguistic and cognitive levels and (b) clarify what the researcher expects them to do with metaphor.

To be more specific, one possible, albeit time-consuming, way to develop familiarity with metaphor is to ask respondents to read and evaluate published metaphor conceptualisation studies in the education area that have adopted this type of elicitation task (i.e., X is (like) Y….) to uncover people's conceptualisations. This seems to have two advantages. Firstly, it may encourage participants to make sense of metaphor from both linguistic and cognitive perspectives; secondly, evaluating other people's metaphors can serve to develop an awareness of what constitutes acceptable or successful responses to elicitation prompts which, in turn, may improve their own metaphors.

However, once such training is introduced, someone may argue that, looking at the metaphors in the published studies may affect participants' own metaphors. It is fairly likely that participants will borrow other people's metaphors wholesale, or at the very least adapt their own in the light of the published ones. It should be noted that the focus of the study is to understand how and why respondents use metaphor to construct their conceptualisations of the target topic; adopting other people's metaphors as their own is not a problem, if the participants can account for why the borrowed metaphors convey their conceptualisations. Providing personal metaphorical reasoning (after 'because…'), in this situation, accordingly becomes extremely important. Researchers may also ask participants to keep notes/journals of their ideas after sets of critical reading (of published research papers), writing down any metaphor that interests them and/or that they want to adopt.

The results of the preliminary study also suggested that researchers could not simply assume that participants would be comfortable with whatever topic or task format they design. Problems are likely to arise, when someone is not clear about the topic and/or they feel the task format is problematic. Therefore, an important implication is that the metaphor elicitation tasks should always be piloted.

3.10 Conclusions

To summarise, the results of the preliminary study suggested that a high proportion of the participants had problems with the metaphor elicitation tasks; the unsuccessful answers involved non-metaphorical statements, no rationale/explanation, or simply no answer at all. Based on participants' feedback at their follow-up interviews, reasons for task failure/difficulties were inferred as being: lack of basic knowledge of metaphor; not understanding why metaphor should be used as a cognitive device to examine concepts; ambiguity about the target topic; limiting responses due to the restriction of a single metaphor; and confusion stemming from the logical or conceptual complexity of the prompts. Given the reasons for the task difficulties, two important implications for the future main study are: (a) it is of great importance to pilot metaphor elicitation tasks before administering them to the participants; this includes checking participants' understanding of the topics and identifying if there is any problem related to the task format; (b) training to facilitate understanding of metaphor and in using it is equally important, which means that a researcher needs to help participants understand metaphor from both linguistic and cognitive perspectives and make sense of the purpose of the metaphor elicitation tasks.

Notes to Chapter Three

[1] I assumed that, when thinking of metaphors for 'writing an assignment' and 'writing for academic purposes', the students could rely on their previous (e.g., writing for their Bachelor's Degree courses) and current writing experience (e.g., writing for their MA courses). With reference to 'writing diaries', many people keep them for periods; so it seemed reasonable to assume that the participants would most likely have some experience of diary writing too. However, in the event, the results (see section 3.7.2) showed that two participants could not make sense of 'writing for academic purposes'. The implication is that researchers cannot simply assume that participants will be comfortable with whatever topic they design. Helping participants clarify the topics provided becomes important if all participants are to complete the 'X is Y' elicitation tasks successfully.

Chapter 4 Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Preamble

Chapter 4 explains how the study was conducted, including the research questions, the design of the study, participants and context, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods. Following a brief theoretical background introduction in section 4.2, section 4.3 lists the research questions and the purposes of the study. The research paradigm and methodology adopted are explained in section 4.4. Section 4.5 describes the research procedures, highlighting the value of conducting the preliminary study. Section 4.6 introduces the research context and the participants. Section 4.7 provides an overview of the data collection procedures. Section 4.8 deals with the methods of data collection and analysis. In sections 4.9 and 4.10, the methods of data analysis and the procedures are discussed. Sections 4.11 and 4.12 cover the trustworthiness and the ethical issues of the study and a summary is given in section 4.13.

4.2 About the Main Study

As discussed in Chapter 2, although it has become reasonably common in applied linguistics and teacher training research to investigate language teachers' and students' understanding of teaching and/or learning through the analysis of the metaphors they have created, very few studies focus on use of metaphor to describe/analyse the development of participants' specific language skills, such as academic writing (see section 2.7.2). In essence, the main study adopted an exploratory stance, providing a thick description of a small group of Chinese MA students' conceptualisations of academic writing, particularly with respect to the required writing assignments/essays they were faced with, during a year-long MA

programme (i.e., from October 2009 to June 2010)[1] via an analysis of metaphors they created in the 'X is Y' format (e.g., "writing is…because…").

Additionally, the literature review of metaphor studies in Chapter 2 (section 2.7.6) also suggests that examining metaphor-based interaction in class and its impacts on students' learning behaviours, in particular to improvement of their writing is an underrepresented area of the research (i.e., Armstrong, 2007; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005; Hart, 2009). The present study was thus intended to explore the impact of sharing other people's metaphors of writing in group discussions on individuals' personal writing.

Methodologically, based on a review of the validity of metaphor elicitation tasks (see section 2.7.3) and the results of the preliminary study (see Chapter 3), which was primarily concerned with the validity of the metaphor elicitation task involving the 'X is Y' format, the main study located and tracked unsuccessful answers to the task and investigated possible solutions to help participants cope with this type of task.

4.3 Research Questions and Purposes of the Research

The main study had four research aims.

1. To have a better understanding of how Chinese MA students in the study use metaphor to conceptualise their academic writing experiences.

2. To generate knowledge of how students develop their academic writing in a year-long MA programme.

3. To have a better understanding of the impact of sharing and discussing individuals' personal writing metaphors on participants' conceptualisations of their writing practice.

4. To explore the linguistic contexts where task failure and difficulty with the 'X is Y' elicitation task occurs, to try and understand the reasons for the problems.

The above aims directly elicit the five main research questions, which are as follows:

RQ1 How do the students metaphorically conceptualise their academic writing experiences over a year-long MA programme?

RQ2 What happens when the students enter into a discussion about their metaphors of writing?

RQ2.1 What effects might these discussion-based metaphor activities have on students' understandings of writing?

RQ2.2 In what ways could discussing metaphors for writing be a useful tool, in terms of enabling students to learn about others' concepts of writing?

RQ2.3 Do students modify or change their metaphors of writing when they discuss and share metaphors with their classmates? And if so, in what way(s) do they do it?

RQ 2.4 If the students make adjustments to their metaphors of writing, how far do they make changes in their conceptualisations of their writing practice?

RQ3 How do students' conceptualisations of writing change over the course of year-long MA programme?

RQ4 How far and why do the students find it difficult to complete metaphor elicitation tasks in the 'X is Y' format?

RQ 4.1 What proportion of the students finds the task problematic?

RQ 4.2 What is the nature of the problem(s)?

RQ 4.3 Which factors appear to be responsible for the students'

difficulties in conceptualising writing metaphorically?

RQ5   Are there any possible solutions which can resolve the problem(s) in

completion of the metaphor elicitation tasks?

4.4 Research Procedures

The study had two phases: a preliminary study (see Chapter 3) and a main study.

No participants from the preliminary study were used in the main study.

4.4.1 The Two Phases of the Study

The two phases of field work were conducted between the years 2008 and 2010.

Table 4.1 lists the data collection time, data collection methods and research

participants of the preliminary and main studies.

Table 4.1 The Data Collection Phases of the Study

Phases	Time	Collection of Methods	Participants
Preliminary	Nov-Dec 2008	Interviews Documents	17 Chinese MA students
Main	Oct 2009-Jun 2010	Interviews Observations Questionnaires Documents	7 Chinese MA students

4.4.2 The importance of the Preliminary Study

As discussed in Chapter 2, although a few recent studies have acknowledged the issues connected with the difficulty/failure of the metaphor elicitation tasks involving the 'X is Y' format, which are normally constructed by the researchers, very little published work has seriously addressed the validity of the method used and offered an explanation of task failure/difficulty. Finding at least a partial answer to this question needed to be undertaken before one could establish the 'best' metaphor elicitation task for the main study. The preliminary study therefore examined participants' responses to sets of metaphor elicitation tasks, so that the task format, which led to the most successful answers could be adopted in the main study. In addition, follow-up interviews about individuals' completion of the task shed light on the perceived reasons for task difficulty or problems that paved the way for the remedial solutions to be adopted in the main study (see 'Learning to use metaphor' training in Chapter 5).

4.5 Research Paradigm and Methodological Theory

4.5.1 Qualitative Inquiry

In briefly defining qualitative research, Liamputtong (2009) suggested that "it relies heavily on words or stories that people tell researchers" (p.1). The intent is primarily to explore real life situations with the aim of understanding them by exploring what people experience and how people construct reality. The present study adheres to factors suggested by Creswell (2009), Dörnyei (2007) and Liamputtong (2009) that characterise the qualitative paradigm:

Exploratory Research

Qualitative research has traditionally been seen as an effective way to enhance or expand knowledge, in particular when a phenomenon is unknown or when little or no information is available regarding it (Dörnyei, 2007). In examining students' metaphorical conceptualisations of academic writing, the present study took up a topic that has barely been explored over the last decade.

Insider Meaning

A fundamental explicit goal of qualitative research is "exploring the participants' views of the situation being studied" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 38). The present study was closely concerned with participants' beliefs and understandings about their academic writing, particularly with respect to the required writing assignments/essays they had to complete in a year-long MA programme.

Small Sample Size

Qualitative research normally works with small sample sizes, which are selected purposefully to permit in-depth inquiry into, and understanding of, the phenomenon concerned (Patton, 2002, p.46). The seven participants in this study were selected through purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). A small sample size was also appropriate to the present study, because it aimed at generating detailed knowledge of participants' conceptualisations of academic writing at an individual level, rather than producing a generalisable result (see section 4.6.3).

Interpretive Analysis and Holistic Analysis

Qualitative research requires "reporting multiple perspectives, identifying many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that

emerges" (Creswell, 2009, p. 176). To present participants' conceptualisations of academic writing, the present study examined various aspects of the topic, including participants' concepts of, feelings (e.g., emotion and attitude) towards, and understanding of writing.

Given the characteristics of qualitative research and of the present study above, it was also felt that this study was not suited to the quantitative paradigm, which tends to (a) favour larger-scale of studies and greater quantities; (b) rely on numerical data as the evidence base that are normally collected from an experimental procedure and (c) use statistical tests to link to hypotheses about phenomena (Denscombe, 2010).

4.5.2 The Phenomenological Approach

Phenomenology is a research methodology for understanding "the lived experience of a person or several people in relation to a concept or phenomenon of interest" (Creswell, 2007, cited in Liamputtong, 2009, p. 5). Therefore, the aim of a phenomenological study is to examine and present how a specific aspect of people's authentic experiences is constructed. To achieve this aim, phenomenology stresses the need to present a detailed description of people's experiences in a way that is faithful to the original experience (Denscombe, 2010, pp.54-55). This requires the researchers to abandon their prejudgements, to rely on participants' accounts about the subject matters, and to cross-check evidence against observed reality.

The phenomenological approach seemed particularly suited to the present situation. Firstly, the main study concentrated on getting a clear picture of people's specific experiences; its purpose was to find out and acquire a better understanding of participants' academic writing in a year-long MA programme.

Secondly, the study involved a detailed description of people's experiences. The focus in the present case was on the meaning and interpretation of participants' accounts of their experiences, namely, an analysis of their metaphorical conceptualisations of their writing. For the two reasons above, it was therefore decided to use phenomenology as the theoretical and philosophical orientation for the main study.

The decision, in general, also had impact on the research design. As the phenomenological approach aims to provide a description of participants' experiences as closely as possible to the original, it was therefore decided, in the present study, to adopt follow-up interviews to make sure my interpretations of their metaphorical statements about their academic writing were consistent with their intended meaning. In addition, given the fact that the approach deals with participants' experiences, the design of questions used at their interviews, concentrated on their understanding of, conceptions of, feelings towards and conceptualisations about the subject matter; questions like "how do you feel about using metaphors to conceptualise your writing?" or "what do you think of the group discussions of individuals' personal metaphors?" were adopted (see section 4.8.2.1 on using semi-structured interviews). The study also employed observations of group discussions of individuals' metaphors of writing, collecting the direct evidence of what was actually discussed, on the basis that the information might not be fully reported by the participants at their interviews (see section 4.8.3.1 on using classroom observations).

4.6 Research Contexts and Participants

4.6.1 Nine Writing Workshops

For reasons of practicality, the study was conducted in the context of a nine-session writing workshop offered as an additional academic writing support for ESL MA students in the Department of Education, at the University of York over an academic year from October 2009 to June 2010. The fundamental goals of the workshops for students were to collect their metaphorical conceptualisations of academic writing, and to share and discuss their academic writing experiences via metaphorical conceptualisations.

The writing workshops started in week 4 in the autumn term 2009, and ran three times every academic term[2]. In general, each session involved practising critical reading, followed by metaphor-based individual/group classroom activities. The critical reading 'half' of each session (e.g., critiquing published research papers) was taught by two lecturers in the Department of Education. I normally led the classroom activities 'half'. This involved collecting participants' metaphors of writing via a task involving the 'X is Y' structure (e.g., "Writing is…, because…") developed from the preliminary study (see Appendix 3) and facilitating metaphor-based group discussions, where participants were asked to comment on their own and each others' metaphors of writing.

It should be noted that the present study did not focus on two lecturers' instructional practices, their methods, philosophies, and words; these are not discussed in the thesis beyond some very general comments.

4.6.2 'Learning to Use Metaphor' Training

Apart from the nine-session writing workshop, participants were also asked to attend four two-hour metaphor-related lectures in two MA modules from week 5

to week 9 of the autumn term (i.e., Term 1) given by a staff member in the Department of Education. It was anticipated that these four sessions would help students complete the metaphor elicitation task. The design of the four metaphor-related teaching sessions and the results of the training will be discussed in Chapter 5.

4.6.3 Sampling

As a large pool of participants would have generated too much data for me to analyse the in-depth experience of each one, a small sample size was deemed preferable, inasmuch as the goal of the study was to generate detailed knowledge about students' conceptualisations of academic writing on a longitudinal basis (i.e., an academic year), rather than to provide a survey-style overview. It was originally hoped to have fifteen participants.

In week 1 of the autumn term in 2009, I placed an 'Academic Writing Workshop' advertisement (see Appendix 4) in the Department of Education to recruit volunteers for the study. Then I attended two Departmental welcome meetings for new MA students, introducing the writing workshops and explaining the intended research procedures. An 'Academic Literacy Background' questionnaire in English (see Appendix 5) was distributed to the eighty students who turned up to the two welcome meetings. This was intended to act as a screening filter, so that anyone who interested the research, but did not meet any of the following two requirements, would be excluded.

Firstly, I limited the sample to Chinese-speaking students. Using a homogeneous group in the study seemed more sensible than adopting a mixed-nationality group for two reasons: (a) English would be the only possible way, in a mixed-nationality group, to drive the study; but this can be a serious problem for

some non-English speaking participants with relatively low English proficiency, and (b) From a researcher's perspective, it would be easier for me, as a Chinese person, to work with a Chinese-speaking group than with a mixed group, particularly, when I delivered the instructions and conducted in-depth interviews afterwards, since the opportunity of participants using their first language would be available when necessary.

Secondly, as the results of the preliminary study suggested unfamiliarity and/or uncertainly about the subject matter seemed to have led to a considerable confusion about how to make explicit conceptualisations through metaphor (see section 3.9.1), it thus seemed important to make sure participants had a clear concept of the target topic before they coped with the task. As participants in the main study would be asked to reflect on and conceptualise their academic writing, it was felt preferable to have participants who exhibited a reasonably accurate understanding of academic writing, rather than people with no clear sense of what that genre of writing entailed.

Twenty out of the cohort of eighty MA students emailed me, indicating an interest and willingness to participate and sent the 'Academic Literacy Background' questionnaire back. Thirteen were enrolled on the programme Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and the other seven were in the programme Language Learning and Education (LLE). Four non-Chinese speaking students (i.e., three Japanese and one Cypriot) and six TESOL students who reported only a vague understanding of academic writing, due to a lack of prior experience of it, were excluded. The remaining ten students were asked to provide slots when they were free, in order to schedule the writing workshops on a weekly basis. In the event, unfortunately, there was no possibility of finding a time suitable for the three TESOL students and seven LLE students to

be available at the same time, due to clashes with their option modules, therefore the three TESOL students had to be eliminated.

The final sample is set out in Table 4.2 below. The sample of seven LLE students was small, but was a reasonable sample size for a qualitative longitudinal study. There was a sex bias in favour of women; indeed the sample (like the MA programme) contained no men.

Table 4.2 Participants in the Main Study

Participant	Age	Subject(s) of the first degree	Prior experience of academic English writing	Proficiency in English (IELTS) Overall/writing
Lucy	28	English	Yes	7.0/7.0
Tina	27	English	Yes	6.5/6.5
Wendy	38	International marketing	Yes	7.0/6.5
Zara	29	Journalism	Yes	6.5/6.0
Tess	22	International finance	Yes	6.0/6.5
Sam	22	English	Yes	6.0/6.0
Joyce	23	English	Yes	6.0/6.0

In week 2 of the autumn term, I discussed informed consent with the seven students (see Appendix 6). The informed consent document requested that all students interested in volunteering provided their signature, as well as their email addresses, so I could contact them to schedule the writing workshops and other relevant research activities (e.g., interviews). Participants were promised as a recompense, for taking part in the study, extra help with developing critical reading. They were allowed to terminate their participation at will at any time. Ethical issues will be discussed further in section 4.12.

4.6.4 The Roles of the Researcher

My role as a researcher in the present study was that of a collector and an analyser of the data. This included collecting participants' metaphors of writing, interviewing participants regarding their metaphors, and their reactions to the metaphor-based group discussions, and observing the process of sharing and discussing of metaphors among participants.

In general, I limited my interaction with the students during the data collection in order to avoid possibly influencing the data. On the other hand, I hoped that the fact that I belonged to the same age group (22-38yr) might also help students feel less stress about being interviewed or observed. During interviews and observations of the group discussions of personal metaphors, I tried not to intervene in the students' talk unless it was necessary. For example when delivering some pre-determined key questions or facilitating students' engagement in group discussions, I limited my input to questions like "What do you think of person A's writing metaphor?", "Does the metaphor apply to your writing?" "What have you learnt from the discussion?". These precautions taken during the study were aimed at controlling the effects that my status or role might have upon my participants. No issue relating to my presence was raised by participants during the study. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that participants were satisfied with my participation in the study. However, interaction was a natural consequence of my presence in the classroom; to refrain from any participation at all would be inconsistent with naturalistic inquiry.

4.7 An Overview of the Data Collection

The timeline for the data collection is set out Table 4.3 below. In general, participants provided their metaphors of writing twice per term (except in Term 3,

where participants provided their metaphors just once). A group discussion about individuals' personal metaphors of writing was arranged at the end of each term. Participants were invited to attend individual interviews after each writing workshop and group discussion. In workshop 9 (in week 8 of Term 3), participants were requested to submit a written statement (either in Chinese or English) with an overall evaluation of how far and in what ways the various metaphor-based activities (i.e., metaphorical conceptualisations of their writing and metaphor-based group discussion) had helped them develop their writing.

Table 4.3 An overview of the Data Collection in the Main Study

Time (2009-2010)		Contents	Methods
Term I	Week 1	Sampling	Questionnaire
	Week 4	Workshop 1: Collected participants' metaphors of writing	Collection of written responses Interviews
	Week 6	Collected participants' modified/updated metaphors after the first two metaphor-related teaching sessions	Interviews
	Week 8	Workshop 2: Collected participants' metaphors of writing	Collection of written responses Interviews
	Week 10	Workshop 3: Examined the impact of group discussion of personal metaphors of writing on individuals' writing	Classroom observation Interviews
Term II	Week 2	Workshop 4: Collected participants' metaphors of writing	Collection of written responses Interviews
	Week 6	Workshop 5: Collected participants' metaphors of writing	Collection of written responses Interviews
	Week 10	Workshop 6: Examined the impact of group discussion of personal metaphors of writing on individuals' writing	Classroom observation Interviews
Term III	Week 2	Workshop 7: Collected participants' metaphors of writing	Collection of written responses Interviews
	Week 6	Workshop 8: Examined the impact of group discussion of personal metaphors of writing on individuals' writing	Collection of written responses Interviews
	Week 8	Workshop 9: Collected participants' evaluation of the metaphor-based activities across the three terms	Collection of written statements

4.8 Data Collection Methods

According to Patton (2002) and Liamputtong (2010), the qualitative

phenomenological approach often employs three basic kinds of data collection: (a)

in-depth interviews, (b) direct observation, and (c) written documents. This study also employed a questionnaire at the sampling stage to select participants (see section 4.6.3). A discussion of the uses of each data collection method follows.

4.8.1 The Use of Questionnaires

4.8.1.1 Reasons for Using Questionnaires

Questionnaires have been used regularly to yield three types of data about respondents: factual questions used to find out demographic characteristics, behavioural questions used to find out their actions and/or personal histories, and attitudinal questions used to find out what they think (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 8). Questionnaires have a range of advantages over other research tools that could access the same type of data (e.g., interviews), the overwhelming one being that they allow easy and swift access to information from a large population, thus saving both respondents' and researchers' time (Dörnyei 2003; Gillham, 2000; Munn & Drever, 2004; Oppenheim, 1992). The present main study managed to target seven suitable participants from eighty students within a short period of time via an 'Academic Literacy Background' questionnaire survey. Another pay-off of using questionnaires is the relative ease with which a questionnaire can be arranged, compared with face-to-face interviews. In the present study, students who were interested the study needed to provide information about their personal and academic literacy. All they needed to do was to allocate a short time (i.e., no more than 25 minutes), to complete the 'Academic Literacy Background' questionnaire and then to send it back to me; no administrative problems were raised.

However, questionnaires also have inherent limitations that can affect a piece of research. Obvious problems include the fact that: (a) short simple

questions can limit the depth of the investigation; (b) there is often difficulty with resolving respondents' misunderstandings of questionnaire items or rubric (Low, 1999) and (c) question wording can have a major effect on answers (Gillham, 2000). An attempt was made to overcome these problems in three ways:

(1) The 'Academic Literacy Background' questionnaire in the main study was pre-piloted and revised before distribution, in the hope that its reliability and the validity of the questionnaire would be increased by eliminating ambiguous or vague wording (see section 4.8.1.2).

(2) Participants were asked to email me any inquiries about the questionnaire and thereby to resolve problems of vagueness or ambiguity.

4.8.1.2 The Design of the Questionnaire

The 'Academic Literacy Background' questionnaire (see Appendix 5), containing a mixture of personal and academic literacy history-related questions, was distributed at two Departmental welcome meetings for new MA students in week 1 of Term 1 in 2009.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections: personal information and academic writing experiences, in that order. The personal information 'half' focused on participants' demographics, involving such factors as educational background, and learning experiences. The second 'half' comprised several open-ended questions seeking information about the participants' literacy history, in particular regarding their academic English writing, including how they learned their conceptions of writing and their experience as learners of writing in English. Because most of the questions were related to personal understanding, concepts and views, it was decided to use open questions, allowing respondents to express their own viewpoints and feelings without being restricted by preselected answers.

Two Chinese PhD[3] students were invited to check the questionnaire in English and two changes were made into the wording, based on their comments. The questionnaire was piloted by three new Chinese MA students (enrolled in October, 2009) from the Department of Education, a week before the welcome meeting and both of them were satisfied with the question items. No inquiries relating to understanding the questionnaire items were raised.

4.8.2 The Use of Semi-structured Interviews

4.8.2.1 Reasons for Using Semi-structured Interviews

The reason for using interviews was that they can, if handled well, yield rich insights into what is in and on people's minds, including informants' experiences, opinions, aspirations, and feelings towards predetermined questions or specific topics (Denscombe, 2010; Patton, 2002). In the present study, using interviews had two purposes: (a) gaining insight into participants' thoughts on, attitudes towards, experiences with, and descriptions of academic writing through their metaphors (or metaphorical statements), and (b) investigating the impact of metaphor-based group discussions on participants' writing, something which could not be directly observed.

Interviewing takes a wide variety of forms and has a multiplicity of uses, which can be generally categorised in five ways mainly by its purpose and structure, namely, structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews, group interviews and focus groups (Bryman, 2004; Denscombe, 2010; Patton, 2002). With structured interviews, the interviewer has a pre-determined list of questions, tightly controlling the wording of the questions, the order in which the questions occur and the range of possible answers (Denscombe, 2010, p. 174). The researcher's role in unstructured interviews,

conversely, is to be unintrusive, encouraging the interviewees to develop their ideas and thoughts at their own speed, after the target topic is introduced by the researcher. Semi-structured interviews defined by Denscombe (2010) are usually guided rather than controlled by a clear list of issues to be addressed and questions to be answered, allowing interviewees to have freedom to express their opinions in depth when necessary, while the event as a whole stays under the control of the interviewer.

Considering the focused nature of the information in the study (i.e., participants' understanding of their writing and their views of the metaphor-based activities), the present study adopted a semi-structured interview format (see section 4.8.2.2) in the hope that the interviewees would have the freedom and flexibility to elaborate points of interests, and also to express ideas, which were important to them.

4.8.2.2 The Design of the Semi-structured Interviews

In the main study, students were invited to attend sets of individual follow-up interviews across the three terms with respect to the creation of individuals' personal metaphors of writing, 'Learning to Use Metaphor' training, and metaphor-based group discussions. Chinese was used in delivering the questions; students were allowed to use both Chinese and English to construct their answers. Students' responses collected at their interviews will be detailed from Chapter 5 to Chapter 9. The semi-structured approach worked reasonably well, in that all the participants elaborated and reported ideas, which were important to them regarding various subject matter (see two samples of interview transcripts in Appendix 21).

The aims/purposes of each set of interviews are detailed below.

Interview 1 (Week 4, Term 1) The sets of interviews (see Appendix 7) had two main functions: firstly, they were used to examine students' understanding of metaphor and to explore their problems/difficulties with the metaphor prompt (see section 5.3). The second function was to investigate why students had chosen specific metaphors to describe their writing (see Chapter 6).

Interview 2 (week 5, Term 1) An interview (see Appendix 8) with the lecturer was arranged to clarify the objectives of the four metaphor-related lectures and how the four sessions would be structured to meet these goals (see section 5.4).

Interview 3 (Week 6, Term 1) The sets of interviews (see Appendix 9) were used to investigate the effects of the first two metaphor-related lectures that participants attended in weeks 5 and 6 (see Chapter 6).

Interview 4 (Week 8, Term 1) These interviews employed one of the questions used in Interview 1 (see Q 3 in Appendix 7), in relation to investigating the rationale for selecting specific metaphors to describe individuals' personal writing (see Chapter 6).

Interview 5 (Week 9, Term 1) These interviews (see Appendix 10) were designed to investigate how far the 'Learning to Use Metaphor' training had helped students cope with the metaphor elicitation task (see section 5.5).

Interview 6 (Week 10, Term 1) These interviews (see Appendix 11) were arranged after the first group discussion of personal metaphors, aiming at investigating the effects of the group discussion of personal metaphors on students' writing (see section 6.9). Hence, the questions were designed to encourage participants comment on the group discussion.

Interviews 7 & 8 (Weeks 2 and 6, Term 2) The questions in the two sets of interviews (see Appendix 12) were used to (a) examine students' explanation for choosing specific metaphors to describe their writing and (b) investigate if and how students' metaphors and related aspects of their writing had changed (see Chapter 7).

Interview 9 (week 10, Term 2) The interviews were to investigate the second group discussion of individuals' personal metaphors (see section 7.9) The interviews employed the same questions as in Interview 6.

Interview 10 (Week 2, Term 3) These interviews reused the questions in Interviews 7 & 8 to clarify the participants' rationale for generating metaphors and to identify actual or proposed changes in their actual writing practices (see Chapter 8).

Interview 11 (Week 6, Term 3) By using the same questions from Interview 6, these interviews investigated the effects of the third group discussion of individuals' personal metaphors on participants' writing (see section 8.9).

4.8.2.3 The Credibility of the Interview Data

One of the key challenges of which interviewers need to be aware is of what Denscombe (2010, p. 178) calls the "interviewer effect". As an interview is essentially a conversation-based interaction between the researcher and the interviewees, the interviewees' responses are likely to be affected by the researcher's participation (Mackey & Gass, 2005; Denscombe, 2010; Patton, 2002). Bearing this in mind, conducting interviews, in the main study, employed the interview skills suggested by Denscombe (2010, pp.182-184) in order to improve the validity of the interviews.

Firstly, the interview questions were open-ended. This type of question not only offers the opportunity to expand or clarify meanings, allowing for a more natural conversation to emerge between interviewer and the participant, but also ensures that the same basic information is addressed in each interview (Bryman, 2004). However, a downside is that the open-ended question based interviews can easily turn into informal conversations, in which topics raised vary considerably and may have little to do with the research aims (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Therefore, secondly, I tried to keep participants to the topics related to the research questions and the interview foci as much as possible. As a result, the interviews successfully followed the designed interview guides. All participants answered the questions as required. Thirdly, during these interviews, I repeated and paraphrased certain comments to facilitate understanding and/or to clarify the situation in order to help me transcribe these interviews. The results showed that all participants responded to my preliminary summary/interpretations of their responses; I always made notes, if any inconsistency was identified. Therefore, this technique functioned successfully as an immediate check on accuracy and understanding (Denscombe, 2010).

4.8.3 The Use of Classroom Observations and Field Notes

4.8.3.1 Reasons for Using Classroom Observations

In qualitative research, observation is used as a powerful method to provide rich phenomenological data. Observation offers researchers a distinct way of collecting data systematically and unobtrusively, representing a first-hand encounter with the phenomenon of interest (Denscombe, 2010; Patton, 2002). Collecting data through classroom observations in the present study provided reasonably direct access to what happened when participants entered into the three

metaphor-oriented discussions (see section 4.8.3.3). The information might not be fully reported by the participants, although they were asked to comment on the discussion at follow-up interviews.

4.8.3.2 Reasons for Using Field Notes

Field notes refer to transcribed notes or the written account derived from the data collected during observations and interviews at the very earliest opportunity after the observations and interviews (Denscombe, 2010). The aim of making field notes in the present study was to reduce the chances of missing information, which according to Bernard and Ryan (2010), is caused by delays in writing up the data, because the fieldwork researcher may "forget events, the whole conversation and /or infer the existence of events and conversation that did not happen" (p. 46). Field notes, as Merriam (1998) suggested, should consist of a verbal description of the setting, people and the activities, direct quotations or the substance of what people said, and the observer's comments (p. 106). My field notes covered participants' reactions/comments on their own and/or other people's metaphors of writing during the discussion and my own reflection on the participants, including their utterances and behaviours (see Appendix 13).

4.8.3.3 The Design of Classroom Observation Schedules

In the present study, three structured video-recorded observations were organised as a way to investigate the results of sharing and discussing personal metaphors of writing. The first observation started in the first group discussion in week 10 of Term 1. An observation schedule was designed to help me take notes systematically, which focused on (a) participants' attitudes on other people's metaphors; and (b) any adjustments to personal metaphors. It should be noted that it was difficult to

pilot the schedule before the first group discussion; therefore, the first observation had to be used as the pilot. The items in the initial observation checklist are summarised in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Items in the Initial Observation Checklist

Students	Personal metaphors of writing	Attitudes to other people's metaphors	The adjustments to personal metaphors

Three items were added to the observation checklist after the first group discussion in Term 1. Firstly, participants' responses (see section 6.9) suggested that discussing personal metaphors allowed participants to recognise their own and/or other people's writing problems. It was thus decided to add 'identifying writing problems' to the list. Secondly, their responses also revealed their plans to change their writing; therefore "formulating plans of actions to change writing" was included in the list. Lastly, several participants also reported their new views of writing; "generating new views of writing" was thus added. The modified observation schedule (see Appendix 14) was employed for the second (in week 10 of Term 2) and third (in week 8 of Term 3) metaphor-based group discussions.

Two Chinese PhD students were invited to review my transcripts of the three recorded sessions. Only two changes in wording were made based on mutual agreement.

4.8.3.4 The Credibility of Classroom Observations

The limitations of classroom observation, as Cohen et al., (2007) pointed out, included the observer's selective attention, selective memory, selective

interpretation, and/or the observer's preconceived thoughts. Bearing in mind the biases above, in the main study, firstly, all three observations were video-recorded, so that the authentic moments of the phenomenon being observed could be recorded. Secondly, the video recording equipment was my camera, which allowed me to set the equipment in one corner of the classroom to capture the students sitting in another corner. The video camera was not set up right in front of the students, to avoid making them anxious or uncomfortable due to being video-recorded. Although the first observation was scheduled in workshop 3 (week 10 of Term 1), I started video-recording in workshop 1 (week 4 of term 1) to accustom students to the recording equipment and to make them feel less intimidated by it. Making field notes during the three group discussions largely reduced the problem of missing information, due to delays in writing up and helped me remember what were to be worth noting. In addition, two Chinese PhD students were invited to review my transcripts of the three recorded sessions in order to increase the reliability of the data transcription. However, a further disadvantage of observations is that the very presence of an observer may affect people's behaviour. To reduce this bias, as a non-participant observer, I did not interpret or talk to participants during the observation unless, I felt, it was absolutely necessary (e.g., facilitating students' engagement in the group discussions).

4.8.4 The Use of Written Documents

Documentary sources are generally defined as written sources (Denscombe, 2010). In the present study, participants were asked to provide their metaphors of writing via a metaphor elicitation task (see Appendix 3). Participants were allowed to use either Chinese or English. For those statements constructed in Chinese, I

translated them into English and then them back to participants to verify the accuracy of my translations.

4.9 Methods of Data Analysis

Data were analysed throughout the data collection, using both metaphor analysis and thematic analysis. Each method is discussed below.

4.9.1 The Analysis of Elicited Metaphors

The goal of the analysis was to provide an insight into students' conceptualisations of academic writing as viewed through their metaphors.

In the main study, participants were asked to provide their metaphors of writing via a pre-specified elicitation metaphor task in an 'X is Y' format (e.g., "writing is…because…") to conceptualise their experiences of academic writing, particularly with respect to the required writing assignments/essays they faced during a year-long MA programme (see Appendix 3). It should be noted that unlike studies that require researchers to identify spontaneous use of metaphor in discourse data, participants in the present study mostly stated both the contextual topic (i.e., various aspects of their writing) and the vehicle terms (i.e., entities to which writing was compared). For example, in Sam's response, she stated explicitly the contextual topic "writing an argument" and the vehicle term "joining in a debate":

> **Writing an argument** is like **joining in a debate**. To make your opponent convince what you say**,** you should not only provide the evidence but also include your own evaluation of the evidence, showing

how the evidence could be used to support your position (Sam, orig. words

in week 6 of Term 2).

The analysis of participants' responses to the metaphor elicitation task

contained two steps. The first step was to decide if their responses were valid. The

quality assessment of successful answers to the metaphor prompt involved the

same two criteria used in the preliminary study (see section 3.2), requiring one or

more metaphors plus associated metaphorical reasoning. Any response was

regarded as failure, if it did not meet either of the two criteria and would be

excluded from the data analysis. To decide if the vehicle terms were metaphorical,

the study employed the MIV approach, examining (a) if there was a contrast in

meaning between the vehicle term/phrase and the topic and (b) if there was a

connection or transfer of meaning between vehicle and the topic (see section

2.5.1). To mark a vehicle term as being metaphorically used, the answers to both

questions (a) and (b) had to be 'yes'. One key reason for using the MIV approach

(rather than the MIP approach) in the present study was that the majority of

participants' metaphorical statements (see Chapters 6, 7, and 8) were in the form

of similes plus detailed qualifying statements (e.g., see Sam's "writing an

argument is like joining in a debate" above). As noted in section 2.5.2, that the

MIP approach is not designed to identify similes as metaphoric, because it

identifies metaphorically used words on the basis of indirectness of meaning

(Pragglejaz Group, 2007), whilst the MIV approach handles linguistic forms that

directly express the source domain of a metaphorical mapping, allowing a simile

to be viewed as an alternative form of metaphor. In this case, Sam's response is

metaphorical, because, firstly, the concrete meaning of the vehicle term "joining

in a debate" relates to discussion in which people or groups state different

opinions about a subject and this contrasts with presenting a critical evaluation of the evidence to support Sam's conclusions in her writing: there being no discussion with other people. Secondly, the phrase can be made sense of in the discourse context—that of convincing her readers.

The second step was to interpret why participants thought their writing might be similar to the entity they were comparing it to. To do this, the study employed the metaphorical entailment-oriented approach, developed by Armstrong (2007), which examined participants' accounts of the rationale of choosing specific metaphors to describe their writing by checking their explanations after 'because…' (see section 2.6.2).

It also should be noted that when analysing these elicited metaphors, as discussed in section 2.6.2, there seems no need to employ a complex procedure, like Steen's (1999) five-step procedure, for relating specific linguistic forms of metaphor (e.g., "academic writing is like joining in a debate") in discourse to underlying conceptual structures. Armstrong (2007) pointed out that in the case of an elicited metaphor there is (or can be assumed to be) a close match with the two underlying conceptual domains (i.e., the target domain and source domain). Thus, in Sam's "debate" metaphor (above), Armstrong's point is that it is reasonable to label the source domain as 'joining in a debate' and the target domain as 'writing an argument'. In other words, "joining a debate" can be treated as both linguistic vehicle and conceptual source and "writing an argument" as both linguistic topic and conceptual target.

One of the key criticisms of much metaphor analysis is the researcher's subjectivity involved in the interpretation (Armstrong, 2011). To improve the trustworthiness of my interpretations, the use of metaphor analysis in the present study consisted of two stages: my preliminary analysis, then follow-up interviews

with students. The aims of the preliminary analysis of students' metaphors of writing were to determine and examine the target (and particularly the various aspects of writing mentioned) and source (i.e., metaphorical images) in each elicited metaphor, to list a set of correspondences between the source and the target and finally to examine the metaphorical entailments (i.e., the rationale for the choices of particular metaphors), in order to identify the extent to which the participants made use of the knowledge about aspects of the source to interpret the aspects of the target. The individual follow-up interviews served primarily as a validation technique. The intentions were to clarify any ambiguous metaphorical mappings in participants' metaphorical statements, to check with them regarding my preliminary interpretations of their elicited metaphors and more importantly, to modify my interpretations if the intended meanings of their metaphors were incongruent with my interpretations. The aim in all cases was to clarify students' intentions and to check my interpretations, rather than actively challenge the validity or aptness of participants' metaphors.

The procedure for the analysis of each elicited metaphor was as follows:

(1) Identifying the elicited metaphor (s) from participants' answers.

(2) Identifying the target and source within each metaphor.

(3) Drafting notes regarding each source's features and qualities.

(4) Mapping source knowledge onto the target.

(5) Checking with each participant my preliminary analysis of her metaphors.

(6) Modifying my preliminary analysis to make it consistent with participants' intended meaning.

4.9.2 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis, according to Liamputtong (2009), refers to a method for identifying, analysing and reporting repeated patterns of meaning across a data set. The present study followed the following steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) to process the data collected from interviews, classroom observations and participants' written texts.

To prepare data for analysis, the data from interviews and classroom observations were translated in English. I also translated participants' written texts (i.e., evaluations of metaphor-based activities) from Chinese into English. I started by generating a few initial codes after several rounds of reading through the transcripts, for example, 'a new awareness of writing arguments'. The next step was to identify themes, which integrated substantial sets of the codes. For instance, I combined 'a new awareness of writing arguments' and 'a new view of in-text referencing' into the theme 'generating new views of writing'. I then went back to the transcripts, checking if the generated themes worked in relation to the codes and modified the themes if necessary. This was followed by identifying any patterns within and across participants' responses.

To improve the validity of the thematic analysis and reduce the effect of the researcher's subjectivity, two Chinese PhD students from the Department of Education were invited to recode the transcripts. Three changes were made to the wording of my identified patterns according to their suggestions.

4.10 Data Analysis Procedures

The process of data analysis in the main study can be broken down into four stages.

Stage 1 I analysed the data collected in Term 1, which was divided into three parts. By looking at students' comments on the four metaphor-based lectures in the interviews, the analysis examined how far and in what ways these lectures helped participants' cope with the metaphor elicitation task (see Chapter 5). The analysis of participants' metaphors of writing involved my preliminary analysis of their metaphors and follow-up recorded individual interviews about their accounts of choosing specific metaphors to describe their writing. Changes were made to my preliminary interpretations of the metaphors, if participants' intended meanings of their metaphors were incongruent with my analysis. The third focus was the impact of the first group discussion on individuals' writing, by analysing the data collected from a classroom observation and individual follow-up interviews (see Chapter 6).

Stage 2 I looked at data collected in Term 2 (see Chapter 7). The analysis of participants' metaphors of writing and their reactions to the metaphor-based group discussion adopted the same procedures used in Term 1. In addition, the data analysis also included their comments at their interviews on any changes related to their metaphors of writing and actual writing practices.

Stage 3 I employed the same procedure of analysing participants' metaphors of writing and their reactions to metaphor-based group discussion used in Terms 1 and 2 (see Chapter 8). As in Term 2, the attention was paid to participants' statements at their interviews about any adjustments made to their metaphors and their writing practices. In addition, the data analysis also covered participants' written statements of their evaluation of sets of metaphor-related activities over the three academic terms.

Stage 4 I synthesised the results of the three terms (see Chapter 9), noting any changes in relation to participants' metaphors of writing and their actual writing practices.

4.11 Ethical Issues in the Study

Christians (2008) laid out a number of key tenets in addressing ethical issues in research. This included informed consent and confidentiality. An ethical framework was set up, in the present study, to deal with both of the two issues.

Informed consent is defined as the procedure to provide sufficient information to individuals to decide if they want to get involved in the study or not after being informed of the purpose of the research, the research procedures, any potential risks and alternatives (Liamputtong, 2009). In the present study, I briefed the participants using the Informed Consent Forms (Appendices 1 & 6). I continually emphasised throughout the study to them that their participation was voluntary and that they could freely choose not to participate at any point. I also made it clear to them that they were entitled to ask questions about any aspect of the study. No element of force, threat or coercion was involved in any way to influence the prospective respondents about their decision on whether or not to join the study. For participants' information, I also discussed the nature and the purpose of the study. I formally introduced myself and explained the kind of information that I hoped to obtain from them.

The second ethical issue concerns confidentiality, which means that individuals should have the right to "maintain secrets, deciding who knows about them" (Israel & Hay, 2006, p. 78 cited in Liamputtong, 2009, p. 36). This requires the researchers to protect the privacy of the participants. In the present study, I reassured them that their identities would not be revealed to others and only my

supervisors, two coders (i.e., two Chinese PhD students) and I had access to the data; no information would be reported in a way that could be connected to them.

4.12 Trustworthiness of the Study

I shall discuss how I employed three techniques, including member checks, thick description, and activities, which increase the credibility of findings recommended by naturalistic inquirers, (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 1996; Kirk & Miller, 1986) improve the trustworthiness of the present study. I will also explain the ways to reduce the problems with the 'self-report data'.

In the present study, multiple sources of data (namely, follow-up interviews, classroom observations and participants' written documents) were included to ensure the data provided a fuller picture of participants' views of the impact of metaphor-related activities on their writing than that presented by any single instrument/source.

As soon as the interviews and observations were completed, I either met or emailed my participants to clarify whatever seemed unclear, and gave participants the opportunity to explain and even add information if necessary.

I then started transcribing the data as soon as I received the data. Upon completion of the transcription and translation into English, I invited two Chinese PhD students from the Department of Education to act as a 'panel of educational researchers' to check the accuracy of my transcripts and coding. Revisions were made according to their clarification or suggestions. All transcripts also went back to participants for the purpose of accuracy check.

In addition, my two supervisors acted as outside 'auditors', monitoring that my research process was acceptable and my findings were supported by the data. I regularly consulted them to assess the accuracy of the collected data.

Give the fact that the present study relied on participants' responses as the major sources of data, to reduce the problems with the 'self-report data', which can result from participants' dishonest reports and/or an act of wanting to please, or just help the researcher (here, me), participants were asked to give honest answers to the questions in the study. They were also told that their answers would not affect their relationship with me or the staff in the Department of Education and they would not get any extra mark in their assessed coursework essay assignments for participation in the study. By checking participants' metaphors of writing and the transcripts of their follow-up interviews, the results suggested that participants generally honestly reported their views, even though they were clear about what I expected from their responses. For example, four participants (Tess, Joyce, Zara and Tina) in Term 1 expressed their uncertainty about metaphor creation and Tina comments indicated that she seemed to be seriously against the use of metaphor to elicit such concepts (see section 5.3.3). It is thus possible to argue that the participants' responses were genuine, without any intention to please me as a researcher.

4.13 Summary

The preliminary study (Chapter 3) developed the metaphor elicitation task to be used in the main study, presented the perceived reasons for the task difficulties/problems and shed light on the possible solutions (i.e., training) which were going to be used for the main study.

The main study involved seven Chinese MA students enrolled in a year-long MA programme. They were required to conceptualise their experiences of academic writing over three academic terms, to share and discuss personal

metaphors of writing in the three group discussions, and to submit a written evaluation of sets of metaphor-based activities.

Techniques and concepts based on a phenomenological approach and the qualitative paradigm were adopted. Multiple sources of data (collected from written documents, interviews and classroom observations), member checks and other activities which can increase the credibility of findings were employed in the study to improve trustworthiness. In addition, a range of validation checks was carried out to improve the quality of the data and to reduce researcher bias, which ultimately mitigated the limitations of the methods and allowed me to proceed directly with data analysis.

Notes to Chapter Four

[1] The main study was initially designed to cover the period after Term 3, while participants were writing their MA dissertations (i.e., from July 2010 to September 2010). However, given the fact that many MA students regularly return to their home countries to do fieldwork and/or to travel in /outside the UK during this period of every year, therefore it seemed difficult to make sure all participants in this study would be available in this period to provide their metaphors of writing their dissertations and attend the follow-up group discussion of individuals' personal metaphors. Thus, the data collection was finished by the end of Term 3. The result was three out of the seven participants went back to China in July, 2010.

[2] The academic year in York is generally divided into three terms running from autumn to summer: autumn term (from early October to mid December), spring term: (from early January to mid March) and summer term (from late April to early July). In the present study, term 1, term 2 and term 3 refer to autumn term, spring term and summer term, respectively.

[3] Two Chinese PhD students in language education were invited, in the study, to help me check the translations (into English) and transcripts of the data, as well as the wording on the design of methods for the data collection.

Chapter Five   **Main Study: 'Learning to Use Metaphor' Training**

5.1 Preamble

To help them cope with the writing-related metaphor elicitation task (in the format "writing is…, because…"), participants were invited to attend a three-stage training programme in the form of four ready-made metaphor-related lectures at the beginning of the main study. The literature available to me prior to the data collection painted a fairly limited picture of support issues connected with an 'X is Y' elicitation technique, in terms of how much support is needed, what form it should take, or guidance on creating and evaluating it. It was therefore decided that this chapter would report the results in more detail than is strictly necessary for a 'Methods' section, showing how the training worked in great detail. The data are presented and organised within the timeframe of the training. The chapter starts with an overview of the training phase in section 5.2, followed by an in-depth description of the results of the three stages, which are set out in sections 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5. Section 5.6 revisits and discusses a few key findings and suggests related implications for research.

5.2 About the 'Learning to Use Metaphor' Training

The six week long training (see Table 5.1 below) started in the autumn term 2010 and was carried out in three stages, involving a set of individual interviews[1] (week 4 of Term 1), four metaphor-related lectures (weeks 5-9) and individual follow-up interviews to collect participants' overall evaluation of the training (week 9). The aims of the training were:

- to explore how far the factors blocking participants' responses to the metaphor elicitation task, which were inferred from the preliminary study

(see Chapter 3), accounted for task difficulties in the main study;

- to investigate in what ways the training resolved the methodological problems with the metaphor elicitation task;

- to examine how far the training helped participants cope with the metaphor prompt.

Table 5.1 Three-stage 'Learning to Use metaphor' Training

Time	Contents	Aims	Methods
Stage 1 (week 4)	A metaphor prompt	To examine participants' understanding of metaphor To explore participants' problems/difficulties with the metaphor prompt	Interviews Written texts
Stage 2 (weeks 5-9)	Four metaphor lectures	To help participants understand metaphor To help participants became familiarised with the use of elicited metaphor technique in language education	Interviews
Stage 3 (week 9)	Participants' evaluations	To examine how far the training helped participants complete the metaphor prompt	Interviews

The data were gathered from audio-recorded interviews and participants' answers to the two written tasks (see section 5.3). The analytic method was adapted from Liamputtong's (2009) semantic analysis (see section 4.9.2), with the goal of discovering generating categories/patterns by repeatedly examining informants' responses (in the form of interview transcripts and participants' written texts) to certain questions. All recorded files and participants' texts were transcribed/translated into English. Two Chinese PhD students from the

Department of Education were invited to help me check the consistency of the transcripts/translations. Except for four typographical errors, no serious inconsistencies were found. The two students were then asked to comment on the data coding. Three wording changes were made to the codes after a couple of discussions. In sum, the researcher effect seems to have been minimal and was not considered to pose a threat to the data analysis.

5.3 Stage 1: An Examination of Understanding of Metaphor (week 4)

Participants were first asked to complete a writing-related metaphor prompt (see Appendix 3), in order to describe their recent academic English writing experiences; they were free to answer in either English or Chinese. They then were invited, at their follow-up interviews, to (a) offer an explanation for their conceptions of metaphor, (b) to comment in as much detail as possible about whether and why they felt the metaphor elicitation task was problematic, and (c) explain why they chose specific metaphors to describe their writing. This chapter focused on the first two aspects (i.e., (a) and (b)). Their explanations for creating metaphors of their writing will be discussed in Chapter 6. The interview was semi-formal in design with a written protocol for participants (see Appendix 7). Thus, I had a chance to explore interesting topics, which participants raised at the interview. Each interview lasted around 20 minutes. Participants used both Chinese and English to construct their responses. All the recordings were transcribed within two days of the interviews. Transcripts were emailed to participants individually in order to allow them to correct anything that I had misinterpreted. All transcripts were analysed by open coding with the goal of discovering common patterns/themes. To identify any patterns across participants' responses, the analysis included a focus on the frequency of the themes that

participants mentioned at their interviews.

5.3.1 Answers to the Definition of Metaphor

Participants' answers are set out in Table 5.2 below. The results suggested that

four of the seven participants provided workable definitions of metaphor.

Table 5.2 Answers to the Understanding of Metaphor

Participants	Definition of metaphor
Joyce	* "Adjective"
Tess	
Wendy	(a) "A figure of speech used one item to describe the other item based on similarities". (b) "Represented thinking and concepts".
Zara	* "A figure of speech like simile, describing something by
Tina	comparing it to something else based on the similar characteristics
Lucy	but without using 'like' or 'as'".
Sam	No answer provided

* Note: The wording represents that used by one of the participants. I have simply categorised the other answers based on similarity of contents. Occasional spelling and grammar errors have been corrected to aid readability. All statements are the participants' original words.

Wendy was the only one who reported that metaphor was related to

concepts, while the other three (Zara, Lucy and Tina) implied that metaphor

involved a resemblance between two items, and demonstrated an awareness that

metaphor and simile differed. It also can be seen from Table 5.2 that three people

seemed to have problems with understanding metaphor. In addition to Sam, who

failed to give any definition, both Tess's and Joyce's conceptions of metaphor as

an adjective were problematic. What is missing in their responses is any reference

to a relation between two distinct entities. Without this basic understanding, it

seems difficult to use one entity to talk metaphorically about another (also see

Kövecses, 2010, p.77).

In sum, the results showed that not all participants had a clear conception of metaphor. As discussed earlier in the preliminary study (see section 3.9.1), the failure to think of an elicited metaphor in part resulted from a lack of basic knowledge of metaphor. It thus becomes important to investigate how far participants in the main study could successfully complete the sort of metaphor elicitation task in the 'X is Y' format, if they had inaccurate or limited understandings of metaphor. Additionally, of the four people who gave workable definitions of metaphor, with the exception of Wendy, who reported that metaphor was related to concepts, the other three held a traditional view of metaphor as a linguistic device. This situation raises an interesting question 'Do participants need to understand how metaphor works as a cognitive device to reflect thinking or concepts, when they deal with this type of metaphor elicitation task?'. I will begin by examining participants' responses to the elicited metaphor task before discussing this question.

5.3.2 Evaluations of Responses to the Metaphor Elicitation Task

The quality assessment of successful answers to the metaphor prompt involved the same two criteria used in the preliminary study (section 3.2), requiring one or more metaphors plus associated metaphorical entailments (after 'because…'). Any response was regarded as failure, if it failed to meet either of the two criteria. Participants' responses are set out in Table 5.3 below. The answers are reported in participants' original words. Bold type highlights the metaphor selected and its entailments.

The general impression of these responses was that the elicitation task around the idea "Writing is (like)…" was not equally easy for everyone. Four of

the seven students gave poorly constructed answers.

Table 5.3 Responses to the Metaphor Elicitation Task in week 4 of Term 1

Participants	Answers
Joyce	I am not confident with writing at MA level. **Writing is difficult at the moment mostly because of grammar.** I normally felt extremely difficult to find a right word or phrase.
Tess	I quite enjoyed the process especially when I deal with the argument in an essay in ELS. I felt myself much improved. **Writing is interesting because** I **like the process of digging out evidences on both sides and reorganise the contents to defend myself**.
Wendy	The process of writing (I mean the essay in ELS) is like **preparing a fashion show**. First, I must clarify **what I wanted to show the audiences (decisions on the thesis statement)** and how I will **plan the event (an outline of the article including the subheadings**). Then I get my first draft. After that, it certainly needs comments such as getting feedback from other team members (like **getting some comments from friends or tutors**) until the final product. I feel the initial stages, that is, **making decisions on the thesis statement and creating outline are quite difficult as it takes time to decide where the writing will go.** I only start writing when I collect enough evidences after a long-time reading. **It is like the "aha moment" for designers.** But I don't think it can work if the deadline is fast approaching.
Zara	At a general level, the essay writing (in ELS) made me think of **preparation for study abroad** that is full of both excitement and anxiousness. **I cannot give a specific reason** as I am not quite sure if it is exactly fit with my writing, but the general impression of the both are similar. I probably will change the metaphor.
Tina	I think **writing** an essay is a **process**. It helped me practise a lot of skills at different stages which I need for the final MA dissertation
Lucy	I found myself initially confused with the idea of 'a flow of argument' when I complete the first essay for ELS. Now I start to make sense what it is meant. I think the **writing is like a tour metaphor worked well.** The writer, **as a tour guide,** is supposed to **guide the reader read through the paper, get to know your ideas step by step and intimately help readers follow the argument easily**. Now I understand the meaning of 'a flow of argument' and therefore have regained my confidence in achieving the goal of writing academic assignments/papers.

Firstly, Sam did not give any answer. Second, no metaphor was found in Tess and Joyce's answers. Instead, they gave non-metaphorical statements which simply conveyed personal feelings about writing (i.e., "writing is difficult" and "writing is interesting"). Third, it is fair to say that Zara's "study abroad" metaphor could be an example of a rich and effective conceptualisation of her writing, but she failed to provide any appropriate explanation for why the metaphor was chosen. As she put it:

> I am not quite sure if it exactly fits with my writing at the moment, but the overall feeling of the two is quite similar. I probably will change the metaphor when I find something more appropriate. (Zara, orig. words)

It was also noteworthy that among the three successful answers, not all the metaphorical entailments given elaborated on participants' intended meaning of the way they viewed their writing. For example, Tina's explanation that "it helped me practise lots of skills at different stages" for her "writing is a process" metaphor was vague and it remained unclear what her writing process looked like. In other words, from my perspective, it would be of great interest to figure out what exactly the "lots of skills" and "different stages" referred to. In this case, a post-hoc questioning session, for example, individual follow-up interviews, could, by asking informants to articulate the intended logic behind their personal metaphor creation, be used as a useful means to interpret this type of 'vague' metaphorical statement.

To summarise, the answers to the metaphor elicitation task suggested that not all participants were able to come up with a metaphor plus an explicit metaphor entailment. The next section will look in detail at individuals' comments

during follow-up interviews, in order to examine why certain people had serious problems in coping with the task.

5.3.3 Responses to Task Problems or Difficulties

Three themes emerged in the participants' responses to the question of tasks problems or difficulties (see Figure 5.1 below).

Figure 5.1 Themes Identified Relating to Task Problems/Difficulties

The task was difficult/confusing/frustrating—6 mentions
The participants showed a lack of knowledge of metaphor—2 mentions
The participants were uncertain about the use of metaphor—4 mentions

Of the seven participants involved, Wendy and Lucy felt generally satisfied with the task and did not report any problems, but the other five expressed varying degrees of frustration with creating personal metaphors of writing. Their comments showed that there were at least two problems that appeared to contribute to task failure.

The first problem had to do with a limited knowledge of metaphor. This can be seen in two participants' answers to the definition of metaphor (see Table 5.2), where Sam failed to give an answer and Joyce treated it as an adjective. Sam was quite explicit that her failure to provide an answer was due to her unfamiliarity with the term 'metaphor':

I know little about metaphor and therefore I do not know how to describe writing through metaphor (Sam, orig. words at her interview).

Joyce was concerned about her definition of metaphor (as an adjective) after completing the second task.

> The requirement for a metaphor in an 'X is Y' structure made me uncertain about the definition of metaphor that I had just given. I came to realise that perhaps I did not provide an accurate definition of metaphor and gave a metaphor in the task. I had a feeling that I was wrong (Joyce, my trans. at her interview).

Although Tess likewise considered metaphor as an adjective, she did not raise any issues at her interview about her comprehension of metaphor and it seemed highly likely that her non-metaphorical answer "Writing is interesting" was the result of seeing metaphor as an adjective.

The second problem was related to uncertainty about metaphor creation (Tess, Joyce, Zara and Tina). The four participants suggested that their frustrations with the rationale of metaphor creation had increased their confusion with the task, to the point at times of hampering their thinking. Although I gave an explanation for the use of metaphor in the task instructions, two questions, "Why is metaphor needed here?" and "Why and how can metaphor be associated with beliefs (about writing), as the instructions required?", were raised. As Tina put it,

> I am not quite sure what you want me to do with metaphor. To understand my writing, you can employ a more direct method such as questionnaires or interviews (Tina, my trans. at her interview).

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5.3.4 Summary

In sum, the results suggested that creating (an) elicited metaphor(s) of writing in the 'X is Y' structure was not equally easy for all the participants. A lack of basic knowledge of metaphor and the confusion about the rationale for metaphor creation were responsible for the unsuccessful answers. The need to check informants' understanding of metaphor and the use of a metaphor elicitation task accordingly become methodologically rather important in conceptualisation of the research.

It was noteworthy that of the four participants (Wendy, Tina, Lucy and Zara) who gave workable definitions of metaphor, Wendy was the only one who brought in a definition of metaphor from a cognitive perspective, representing "thinking and concepts", while the other three seemed to demonstrate a traditional formal definition, which distinguished metaphor from simile. At their interviews, four participants' responses (Tess, Joyce, Zara and Tina) made it crystal clear that they thought the lack of knowledge of metaphor at a cognitive level, and the requirement to create metaphors to interpret their thinking about their writing processes certainly increased the task difficulty. Hence, the results provide a fairly clear answer to the question raised earlier (section 5.3.1) regarding whether participants need to understand how metaphor works as a cognitive tool to reflect thinking or concepts when they deal with this type of metaphor elicitation task. Clearly, the answer has to be yes. In other words, in this type of research, to establish a working definition of metaphor and ultimately reduce task confusion, it is important to introduce metaphor in a way that integrates both a linguistic and a cognitive approach.

5.4 Stage 2: Four metaphor-related teaching sessions (weeks 5-9)

Participants attended four two-hour, metaphor-related lectures within formed part of two MA modules [2] (see Table 5.4 below) given by a staff member in the Department of Education.

An interview with the lecturer was arranged in week 5 to clarify the objectives of the four lectures and how the four sessions would be structured to meet these goals. With the permission of the lecturer, the interview was audio-taped in his office. It was conducted in a semi-structured format, using a brief and non-ordered two-question interview protocol, plus additional probing questions (see Appendix 2). Additionally, I had intended to observe the participants' in-class reactions to the four sessions; however, due to limited space in the lecture room, there was no chance for me to sit in the classroom. It was therefore decided to abandon classroom observations and I only asked the students to keep notes of their thoughts regarding the four sessions, to be used at the follow-up interviews (see section 5.5).

Table 5.4 Four Metaphor-related Teaching Sessions

MA Modules	Titles	Time
Module One	Session 1: The role of metaphor in language and language education	Week 5
	Session 2: The uses of metaphor in language education and teacher training	Week 6
Module Two	Session 3: Metaphor in vocabulary and discourse	Week 8
	Session4: Identification of metaphor in discourse	Week 9

The analysis of the lecturer's responses employed the same method as that used for the participants' interviews at Stage 1. Five themes were identified in his

responses to the goals for these sessions (see Figure 5.2 below).

Figure 5.2 Five themes Identified in the Lecturer's Responses

- exploring the nature of metaphor at both linguistic and cognitive levels;
- examining how key metaphors can vary across languages and cultures;
- considering how aspects of education have been conceptualised by teachers and learners by means of metaphor;
- practising critically commenting on empirical data from previous metaphor research;
- practising identification of metaphor in discourse.

5.4.1 Session 1 (week 5)

Session 1 was a basic introduction to the nature and boundaries of metaphor in a cross-cultural context (Appendix 15). This session was designed to resolve three questions:

- What is metaphor?
- How does it differ between languages and cultures?
- Why teach it on language courses?

At a general level, Session 1 was divided into two parts. In the first part, the lecturer created eleven basic questions, which he assumed were likely to be raised by students with no/limited knowledge of metaphor. The purpose was to rapidly give students a basic sense of metaphor including a definition, its constitutive element(s), and the range of the linguistic structures involved. Additionally, two in-class exercises, 'Generalising Metaphor from Language Data' (see Appendix 16) and 'Evaluating Conceptual Metaphor' (see Appendix 17) were used to bring in the concept of conceptual metaphor. The lecturer described

what he hoped would occur, "helping students quickly get a feeling for metaphor at both linguistic and conceptual levels…" (The lecturer's orig. words). Additionally, the lecturer wanted to introduce the topic of metaphor across cultures. In the second part, the lecturer attempted to briefly introduce the rationale for using metaphor in language and education by presenting six reasons, which were intended to serve as a foundation for an introduction to the application of metaphor to language education and teacher training in Session 2.

5.4.2 Session 2 (week 6)

The lecturer stated that session 2 was more applied, exploring how and why metaphors can be used to reflect concepts and thoughts (about teaching, learning and finally writing). To accomplish this, the session began by presenting a theoretical rationale for making use of metaphor creation (i.e., sociocultural approaches to learning and semiotics) and briefly reviewed how metaphor creation has been used as a tool in various disciplines. Students then engaged with some concrete examples of elicited metaphors in the 'X is Y' format from previous metaphor research in language education and teacher training such as Block (1992), Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and Wan (2007), and both evaluated and analysed the data.

5.4.3 Sessions 3 & 4 (weeks 8-9)

Session 3 was also an introduction to metaphor, much like session 1, except that it focussed more on metaphor theory and less on cross-cultural differences. Session 4 was a practical workshop on identifying spontaneous metaphor in both written and oral discourse, but it made few references to any underlying 'X is Y' structures.

5.4.4 Summary

The general impression from this interview with the module tutor was that the four lectures were useful for the present study for at least three reasons: they could (a) help participants establish a concept of metaphor; (b) allow participants to develop an awareness of what constitutes acceptable or successful metaphorical completion of elicitation prompts through critiquing empirical data, and (c) potentially improve participants' skill in the creation of appropriate metaphor.

5.5 Stage 3: Responses to the Metaphor Teaching Sessions (week 9)

The follow-up interviews with participants were used to collect their responses to the four lectures, investigate how far these sessions helped them complete the metaphor elicitation task, and decide if further training was needed. To build a rapport with the participants, the interview was structured to resemble an informal conversation. It followed a semi-structured format, involving two broad questions plus additional probing questions (see Appendix 10). The probes allowed for a deeper exploration of topics important to the study. Following the same procedure of analysis as used in the previous two stages, by repeatedly examining the answers to specific interview questions, I first looked for common categories and then counted the frequency of topics mentioned, in order to identify any patterns within and across participants' responses.

One point to note is that all seven students commented almost exclusively on the Sessions 1 and 2; little was said about Sessions 3 and 4 in their minds. Indeed, only one participant commented on the last two sessions; she considered them as follow-up practice, reviewing the theoretical knowledge of metaphor she had learnt at the first session. It was therefore decided to concentrate here on participants' comments on the first two sessions. It was also noteworthy that all

participants made some comments on the differences of metaphor across languages and cultures at their interviews, such as English and Thai body-part metaphors. However, this was not the focus of the interviews. The following analysis therefore does not deal with their culture-related responses. In the following sections, the two interview questions are discussed separately, using excerpts from the data to illustrate the findings.

5.5.1 Responses to Interview Question 1

Q1. *Could you tell me whether and how far the metaphor-based teaching sessions have helped you understand the concept of metaphor?*

All participants chose to respond to this question by focusing on Session 1. Five themes were identified in their responses to Question 1 (see Figure 5.3 below).

Figure 5.3 A Summary of Themes in Responses to Question1

- Useful/helpful/practical/understandable/beneficial—7 mentions
- Metaphor is treating one thing in terms of something else—4 mentions
- Metaphor involves two different entities—4 mentions
- A metaphorical concept hides some aspects of the concept that are inconsistent with that metaphor—3 mentions
- Metaphor is conceptual and represents thinking—6 mentions

It can be seen from Figure 5.3 that participants' responses suggested that Session 1 was helpful for understanding metaphor as a whole. Three activities were highlighted from Session 1, which were considered beneficial as a way of quickly giving participants a basic knowledge of metaphor.

The first was the lead-in, where the lecturer took a small set of invented short sentences and asked (and answered) eleven basic questions about them. The

students discussed the data in the light of the questions and answers. Four students (Joyce, Sam, Tess and Tina) stated that this technique helped them understand the definition of metaphor as a relationship between two entities, neither of which may be directly asserted. To borrow Sam's words:

> Through "the head (teacher) is a pig" (example), my first impression about metaphor is that it could be a sort of structure involving two entities. There must be some relationship between the two. Presumably, the teacher has done something silly. That's why she/he was treated as a pig. (Sam, orig. words)

Tess was impressed with the examples of metaphors in which the target or vehicle was not apparent and began to make sense of how a metaphor worked:

> I think "when I teach people I marry them" (example) quite interesting. Clearly, "Marry" did not refer to "really getting married with someone" in the sentence. I assume it implies a sort of teaching attitude. However, the exact link between the 'teaching' and 'marrying with someone' was not evident." (Tess, orig. words)

Tess agreed with the lecturer's comments that "marry" was metaphorically used, reflecting a conceptual metaphor "teaching is a marriage" and it vividly described the speaker's attitude to teaching. She thus drew the conclusion:

> Teaching is treated as seriously as marriage in the context. The speaker could be a responsible teacher and was enthusiastic about teaching (Tess,

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orig. words).

The second activity highlighted by the students was 'Generalising Metaphor from Language Data' (see Appendix 16), which involved working in small groups to hypothesise an underlying 'X is Y' metaphor from short sets of largely invented sentences. The work was presented as generalising from data, with the standard implication that there need be no one correct answer and the more data there was, the more reliable a generalisation could be, for example:

Anger is _____

A wave of anger rolled over him.

The fury rose then fell.

The sets of examples were also intended to become increasingly difficult, moving from the first type (Ideas are…) to the second (What is what…), in the extract below:

Ideas are _____

I don't know. Give me an idea.

It was my idea, not hers.

These ideas have been passed down through the centuries.

The Europeans got the idea of zero from the Arabs.

WHAT is WHAT? _____

I haven't the foggiest idea what you mean

I'm a bit hazy about nuclear physics!

His mind was in a haze of confusion and wonder.

She had just a hazy idea of what he was asking her to do.

She said her mind was a bit foggy.

I was in a haze; I just couldn't think straight.

This activity had several different effects.

Firstly, after the exercise, Joyce, Sam, Tess and Tina altered their definitions of metaphor or indicated an intention to modify the metaphors they had created at Stage 1. Joyce and Tess came to realise that their previous answers to the definition of metaphor as an adjective was problematic and therefore created a new account of their understanding of metaphor that emphasised treating one thing in terms of something else:

I start to make sense that the essence of metaphor creation is to think about "Can X can be treated as Y?". In the two expressions "a wave of anger rolled over him", and "The fury rose then fell", "anger" is visualise by tangible objects such as wave or liquid. Here, "wave" and "liquid" were not only used to describe anger, but also to explicitly visualise the emotion in specific ways. I then realise that my previous answer "writing is difficult" was not a metaphor, because "difficult" is just an adjective but not an entity. Writing can be 'difficult', but it cannot be treated as 'difficult'" (Joyce, orig. words).

Sam responded to the activity by adding new comments to her earlier remarks at the beginning of her interview regarding her general feelings about metaphor:

The vehicle "wave" allowed me to vividly feel the target "anger". One function of metaphor is to concretize abstract concepts (such as thoughts, minds and anger) by means of other concrete concepts (such as container, wave or liquid) to facilitate understanding. (Sam, orig. words)

Tina's updated notion of metaphor "…helping people get a grasp on concepts that are not delineated in reality" made her feel that her previous "process" writing metaphor and her metaphorical entailment were too vague; she accordingly assumed that the researcher did not get a lot useful information from the metaphor regarding her writing. She promised a revision to her 'process' metaphor, either by choosing a more concrete metaphorical image or by giving more details to express her intended meaning.

The second effect of the activity was reported by Lucy, Wendy and Zara, who said that it had made them think about how a metaphor simultaneously highlighted and hided some aspects of the target concept, and they came to the conclusion that only parts of the two entities of a metaphor were actually used:

The "Ideas are plants" metaphors highlighted people's beliefs, which were deeply rooted in one's mind. Such a belief-related concept was certainly obscured in the other metaphor "Ideas are possessions that can be given to someone else". (Wendy, my trans.)

She thus indicated that she would create more metaphors to present other aspects of writing hidden by the single "fashion show" metaphor. It was also interesting to note that Zara suggested that an awareness of the nature of metaphorical systematicity explained her difficulty at Stage 1 in finding a single

metaphor to cover multiple aspects of the writing process; the explanation served to reduce, she said, her lingering anxiety. More importantly, she felt that it helped her understand the requirement to think of a list of 'X is Y' metaphors in the instructions because:

> Initially, I was not quite sure why you asked us to think of a list of metaphors. I had simply assumed that one metaphor could work. (Zara, orig. words)

Thirdly, all participants came to see that metaphor could be conventional and expressions could be used without active metaphorical processing as a comparison (or in their words, without "thinking"):

> The groups of metaphorical expressions provided linguistic evidence for the existence of corresponding conceptual metaphors and clearly showed how conceptual metaphor can represent basic thinking patterns (Joyce, orig. words).

The third activity cited from Session 1 was "Evaluating Conceptual Metaphor" (see Appendix 17) that involved matching fourteen anger-related expressions "She was really hot under the collar" to five elaborations of a container such as "steam-engine", "electric circuit" or "volcano". It is noteworthy that although the set of examples involved English expressions (e.g., "she just bottled it up inside her for week" and "He finally erupted"), all participants reported that they easily found the corresponding/similar expressions in Chinese. Therefore, no problem with respect to the understanding of these expressions was

raised. At a general level, all participants felt the activity was helpful for three reasons. Firstly, they quickly began to make sense of two types of metaphor: conceptual metaphors (e.g., ANGER IS HEAT) and related metaphorical linguistic expressions (e.g., "She was really hot under the collar"):

> The "She was really hot under the collar" expression exploited an elaborate underlying concept "heat", reflected by a conceptual metaphor "Anger is heat" to concretize the concept "anger" (Lucy, orig. words).

Secondly, they got the general idea of elaboration and said that the activity reinforced the idea of a seemingly simple everyday expression having a complex metaphorical structure and the concepts could underlie surface metaphorical expressions. Thirdly, by classifying these expressions into the five prescribed categories, all participants reported that they came to realise that "the sources of conventional metaphors were often quite close to the human body and basic life experiences" (Joyce and Tina, my trans.).

5.5.2 Responses to Interview Question 2

Q2. Could you tell me whether and how far the metaphor-based teaching sessions have helped you cope with the elicitation metaphor tasks?

Participants chose to respond to this question by focusing on the second, more applied, lecture. Two activities were cited from the session.

The first was 'Curious Metaphors in Education', a completion task (see Appendix 18), where students had to guess each of the "*because*" explanations from a list of 'X is Y' metaphors of teaching taken from Cortazzi and Jin (1999). Participants were first asked to produce a summary of Cortazzi and Jin's paper

(see Appendix 19 for an example of a student's summary) and then to work out the metaphorical entailments of these "teaching is …" metaphors. Their answers were then compared with the originals. Four themes were identified in participants' responses to the activity (see Figure 5.4 below).

Figure 5.4 Themes Identified in Responses to 'Curious Metaphors in Education' Task

- Clarifying how teachers and/or students think about teaching and learning —7 mentions
- Facilitating self-reflection (on teaching/learning)—7 mentions
- The importance of metaphorical entailments —7 mentions
- Criteria for good metaphorical entailment—7 mentions

Participants' responses suggested that the activity had several different effects.

Firstly, after the activity, there was a general acknowledgement from all participants that the creation of metaphor about teaching and learning could be used as a means of "finding teachers' and students' subject knowledge" (Lucy, orig. words) and "presenting different perspectives of teaching and learning" (Tina, orig, words).

Secondly, all participants felt that the elicited metaphor technique was an efficient way to promote self-reflection on relevant experiences. For example, from a teacher's standpoint, Zara, Joyce and Wendy demonstrated a genuine recognition of the benefit of metaphor creation, in the sense that the activity caused them to reflect on their own teaching experiences:

Each metaphor was an inspiring story and presented various aspects of

teaching and learning. These made me reflect on my teaching, for instance, "What should my classroom role be?", "Should I keep acting as a judger?" and "If I adopt the "teacher as an actor/entertainer", will my teaching be improved?" (Zara, my trans.).

The third effect was reported by Tina. She seemed to be seriously against the use of metaphor to elicit such concepts at Stage 1 (see section 5.3.3). Her comments after the activity indicated that, although she still held the view that a questionnaire could more easily lead to a quick result, compared with eliciting metaphors, she at least made sense of the use of eliciting metaphors to uncover people's intended meanings:

> These teaching and learning metaphors helped me to clarify how a metaphor worked to reflect underlying concepts and investigate subjective knowledge. It was quite interesting to see how students and teachers' used metaphor to conceptualise teaching and learning. (Tina, orig. words)

Additionally, all seven students claimed to have realised from this activity the importance of "because …" when interpreting a metaphor. They were able to explain why metaphorical entailments were of great importance in this type of metaphor elicitation task:

> In order to figure out what knowledge is carried over from the source domain to the target domain, clarifying the ways that the aspects of source were actually involved in a metaphorical structuring thus became rather important. That's how a metaphorical entailment worked (Wendy, orig.

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words).

They also noted that not all the metaphors were found easy to interpret, even after the 'correct' answers had been provided, but having some more opaque examples served to make all the students think about the nature of 'good' metaphorical entailment—which should clarify, they said, which aspects of the source concept were involved and how these connected with the 'target' concept. Given the post-hoc nature of the interviews, it was not entirely clear how far these views were influenced by the lecturer's later test for a pedagogically good metaphor and the activities which followed it (see below).

The second activity cited from Session 2 was a 30-minute small group analysis task, where the input was three texts written in English by Chinese students discussing personal metaphors of writing (e.g., Writing is driving; Writing is weaving) taken from Wan (2007) where the informants were asked to create and develop metaphors via the metaphor prompt "Writing is (like)…" to conceptualise the process of their academic English writing based on their memories of writing an essay (see Appendix 20). Students had to read the three texts, establish what source-target correspondences were involved, and work out how far these covered all key aspects of writing, whether they encompassed problems with writing, and finally whether these metaphors suggested solutions to the writing problems. The activity involved considerably more detailed critical analysis than the previous tasks. More specifically, three criteria were given, requiring students to work out if the three accounts of writing met the standards which are set out in Figure 5.5 below. Four themes emerged in participants' comments on this activity (see Figure 5.6).

Figure 5.5 Three Criteria for A Successful Writing Metaphor

A pedagogically appropriate metaphor of writing should do at least three things:

1. It should contain all the stages involved in the writing process.

2. It should be able to describe the problems and not just successful writing.

3. It should indicate ways to resolve the problems.

Figure 5.6 Themes Identified in Responses to the "Metaphors of Writing" Task

- Metaphor as a means of examining how people conceptualise their writing
  —7 mentions
- Facilitating self-reflection—7 mentions
- Three criteria for a successful writing metaphor—4 mentions
- Three examples of writing metaphors—7 mentions

In their responses to the metaphor completion task based on Cortazzi and Jin (1999), all participants again acknowledged the usefulness of the elicitation task in promoting self-reflection on relevant experiences, examining students' and teachers' subjective knowledge and presenting multiple perspectives of the target.

Five of the seven students (Lucy, Zara, Joyce, Wendy and Tess) found the activity helpful as regards learning from other writers and constructing their own metaphors. For example,

> I learnt how to make use of different aspects of an object into a metaphorical construction. In the "weaving" metaphor, the writer described the procedures of writing, thoughts at specific writing stages, feelings and actions, which offer me a clue about how to expand my metaphors of writing. (Lucy, orig. words)

They also felt that the criteria for a successful metaphor of writing, taken together, seemed like scaffolding and made a writing metaphor highly structured and they indicated a willingness to revise their previous answers at Stage 1. More importantly, the three criteria were seen as "a model of thinking for reflection on writing" (Zara, orig. words), which may increase "the awareness of identifying writing problems and finding possible solutions in the process of reflecting on writing" (Wendy).

The notion of hunting for solutions to writing problems in a metaphor was new to all seven. They viewed the analysis of three accounts of writing as a good opportunity to learn from other writers. As Wendy put it, with respect to the metaphor "creating a route plan to prevent getting lost when driving":

it reminded me that I should always remember what the key points were that I wanted an essay to include, which would certainly help me get back on track when I got lost. (Wendy, orig. words)

5.5.3 Summary

Topics emerging from interview responses to the four metaphor lectures summarised in Table 5.5 (below) show that the training was largely successful. By citing five activities from the first two sessions, all participants elaborated and explained how the training had helped them establish, where needed, a working definition of metaphor, make sense of the rationales for metaphor creation in education, understand the importance of "because" explanations, and generate explanations for their personal metaphors.

Firstly, all participants felt that these metaphor-related teaching sessions had given them the basic knowledge and skills that, in practice, would be needed

for this type of metaphor elicitation task. Those who most needed help with the definition and content of metaphor (Sam, who had written nothing, and Joyce and Tess, who had thought metaphor was an adjective) reported being clearer about both topics. Those who already had an idea about the basics (Lucy, Wendy and Zara) focused on developing an appreciation of the idea that each metaphor provided a background for some things at the same time as it highlighted others.

Table 5.5 Topics Emerging from Responses to Four Metaphor Lectures

Participants / Topics	Sam	Joyce	Tina	Lucy	Wendy	Zara	Tess
Definition of metaphor	✓	✓					✓
Constitutive elements of metaphor	✓	✓	✓				✓
Highlighting and hiding by a metaphor				✓	✓	✓	
Reconstructing personal metaphors		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Importance of metaphorical entailments	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Facilitating self-reflection (e.g., on writing/ teaching)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Metaphor reveals subjective knowledge	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: '✓' highlights the topics about which participants made positive comments at their follow-up interviews about the metaphor teaching sessions.

Secondly, they all claimed to have realised that metaphor creation could be used as a useful means of facilitating self-reflection (e.g., on writing/ teaching), examining people's subjective knowledge, and presenting multiple perspectives of the target (e.g., teaching, learning and writing).

Thirdly, they started to make sense of the importance of "because…"

when interpreting a metaphor and acknowledged that 'good' metaphorical entailment should clarify which aspects of the source concept were involved and how these connected with the target concept.

Lastly, they found the engagement with empirical data helpful regarding learning from other writers and five out of seven people indicated a willingness to reconstruct their own metaphors.

5.6 Discussion and Implications

5.6.1 Difficulties with the Metaphor Elicitation Task

The key findings of the three-stage training in terms of task difficulty/failure were that a high proportion of participants was unable to complete this type of metaphor elicitation task successfully. Only two out of seven participants gave workable answers. The unsuccessful answers to prompts, exactly like the ones identified in the preliminary study (see sections 3.7.1 & 3.8.1) were repeatedly found to involve non-metaphorical statements, no provision of a rationale for metaphorical reasoning, or simply no answer at all. In sum, a general conclusion is that metaphor elicitation tasks cannot be seen as method-free.

With reference to the likely reasons for participants' task difficulty/failure, a limited understanding of metaphor and uncertainty about the usefulness of metaphor creation seemed to be the major causes behind the unsuccessful answers. Although the incidence of the two problems in larger samples seems unclear, an important implication, also suggested by the preliminary study (see chapter 3), for future research, is that elicitation tasks should always be piloted.

One might argue that if a study is intended to produce a generalisable result, normally from a large number of participants (e.g., 2847 pre-service Turkish teachers in Saban, 2010), rather than by focusing on individuals, there

seems no need to worry about the informants who do not or cannot provide an appropriate metaphor, nor to examine the causes of failure, unless the number of unsuccessful answers is large. In Saban's study (2010), for example, 137 (5%) responses to the prompt "A student is like… because…" did not offer an answer, provide a rationale for selecting specific metaphors and/or give an explicit metaphor. They were thus eliminated. The low failure rate of 5% seems not to have seriously affected the results. However, if, on the other hand, the goal of a study is to generate detailed knowledge of respondents' conceptualisations at an individual level, or the sample size is going to be small, as in the present study with only seven participants, even a low failure rate can seriously affect the results.

5.6.2 Implications for Training

To reduce the task failure rate, what is needed is not only an understanding of where and why the problems occur, but also an investigation of possible solutions. There are few details in the literature concerning how to resolve the methodological problems with this sort of metaphor elicitation technique. Davis (2009) remains one of the few studies that identifies the unsuccessful answers to this type of elicitation task and attempts to supply participants with specific examples of metaphor. However, the clear examples provided appear not to have worked for his participants, who lacked basic knowledge of metaphor. Therefore, to help participants complete this type of task, it is important to explore in detail what sort of methodological support, and specifically which training activities work and how much support is needed.

In the present study, the training was provided in the form of four lectures, aiming at helping participants establish a working definition of metaphor and make sense of the rationale for metaphor creation in education. Clearly, in

metaphor conceptualisation studies, a series of metaphor elicitation tasks focus on the function of metaphor at a cognitive level, and are normally used to draw inferences from the metaphors that people use to express their thinking, attitudes and behaviour. However, the results of the present study show that the cognitive use of metaphor was not transparent to people who lacked basic technical knowledge of this field. They seemed to be struggling with associating metaphor with concepts and thoughts, giving rise to questions relating to the logic of using metaphor in this type of task (e.g., "Writing is (like)… because…"). Therefore, I drew the same conclusion as I did from the preliminary study (see chapter 3), namely that, to reduce the incidence of task failure of the 'X is Y' metaphor elicitation task, it seemed necessary to make sure participants had a clear awareness of metaphor as a cognitive mechanism.

Turning to participants' comments on the four metaphor-based teaching sessions, their feedback made it clear what types of activities worked as good training devices.

In the first teaching session, the 'hands-on' approach to introducing the theoretical knowledge of metaphor worked well, giving participants the basic sense of metaphor. The introduction to conceptual metaphor was considered useful in connecting metaphor with underlying concepts and thoughts. This served as a theoretical preparation, allowing participants to make sense of the application of metaphor creation to education via analysing empirical data in the second session.

The activity of trying to work out, in the second session, the (not always obvious) connections between a set of metaphors and the target concept (i.e., teaching), initially without, and then with, access to the original students' explanations taken from previous metaphor research, proved effective as a way of

learning the importance of the "because…" in the metaphor elicitation task and acknowledging that 'good' metaphorical entailment should clarify which aspects of the source concept were involved and how these connected with the target concept. Clearly, elicited metaphors are largely uninterpretable and unusable unless a 'because' explanation is provided. This type of activity may be needed as pre-training.

Analysing and evaluating the data from previous metaphor research, as in the second metaphor-related teaching session, seemed to have two advantages: firstly, it encouraged participants to engage actively with concrete examples, both linguistic and conceptual; and secondly, critiquing the data allowed them to develop an awareness of what constitutes useful responses to the metaphor elicitation prompts, and finally to improve their own metaphors. The impact of examples of metaphors on individuals' metaphor construction and/or generation will be discussed in Chapter 6 (see section 6.2).

Notes to Chapter Five

[1] The set of individual interviews was set up after the first writing workshop; the aims were to (a) collect participants' reactions to the task, including their understanding of metaphor and problems with the task, which are discussed in this chapter (see section 5.3) and (b) ask participants to offer an account of their metaphorical reasoning, which is the focus of Chapter 6 (see section 6.2).

[2] Module 1 is one of the MA option modules in the Department of Education. With the lecturer's permission, five of the seven students who had not registered for the module were allowed to attend the two metaphor-related sessions. Module Two was compulsory for all the seven students.

Chapter 6   Main Study: Conceptualisations of Academic Writing in Term 1

6.1 Preamble

This chapter presents the findings of the seven students' metaphorical conceptualisations of their academic writing in Term 1 (from section 6.2 to section 6.8) and their reactions to the first group discussion of individuals' personal metaphors (section 6.9), followed by a brief summary (section 6.10). It may bear repeating here that this chapter, including the following Chapters 7 & 8 regarding students' metaphorical conceptualisations of their academic writing in Terms 2 and 3, are inevitably rather 'descriptive'. The intention is to explicate how students' writing and each entity to which it is compared are similar and specifically how far their metaphors convey different aspects of their writing.

Three writing workshops were arranged in Term 1 (see Table 6.1). The main goals for the workshops were to collect students' elicited metaphors of writing, and investigate the effects of the group discussion of individuals' personal metaphors on their writing. As noted in section 4.10, the analysis of elicited metaphors contained two steps, my preliminary analysis and interviews with students. The individual follow-up interviews were arranged after each round of metaphor collection, in which participants had the opportunity to explain the meaning of their metaphors and their own conceptual frameworks; the intention was not only to clarify any ambiguous metaphorical mappings in students metaphorical statements, but also to identify any incongruity between my preliminary analysis and students' intended meaning of their metaphors; so that adjustments could be made to my interpretations.

This chapter will first examine individuals' elicited metaphors of writing from week 4 to week 9 in Term 1 and then explore the results of the group

discussion regarding personal metaphors of writing in week 10. It should be noted that in the following summary tables of participants' metaphors, the data from their written statements are the participants' original words, but the interview extracts (in weeks 4, 5 and 6) are my translations of their responses in Chinese. Bold type highlights the metaphor selected.

Table 6.1 Data Collection in Term1

Term 1	Contents	Method(s)
Week 4	Workshop 1: Collected participants' metaphors of writing	Collection of written responses Interviews[1]
Week 6	Collected participants' modified/updated metaphors after the first two metaphor-related teaching sessions	Interviews
Week 8	Workshop 2: Collected participants' metaphors of writing	Collection of written responses Interviews
Week 9	Investigated the results of 'Learning to Use Metaphor' Training	Interviews[2]
Week 10	Workshop 3: Examined the impact of group discussion of personal writing metaphors on individuals' writing	Classroom observations Interviews

6.2 Term 1: Joyce's Elicited Metaphors

Joyce's answers to the metaphor prompt in Term 1 are summarised in Table 6.2 below. She failed to provide a metaphor at the first writing workshop, responding to the prompt with a non-metaphorical evaluation of her personal writing: "Writing is difficult at the moment mostly because of grammar…" (Joyce, orig. words). It was therefore decided to exclude her response from the data analysis. As discussed in section 5.3.3, the task failure resulted from a lack of basic knowledge of metaphor and confusion about the rationale for metaphor creation in

the task.

Table 6.2 Joyce's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 1

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 4[3]	…**Writing is difficult at the moment mostly because of grammar**. I normally felt extremely difficult to find a right word or phrase…(Joyce, orig. words).
Week 6	**My essay writing at the moment is quite like weaving** for two reasons. Firstly, at the beginning of weaving, it takes time to think about the design of the target image and then about choices of colour thread. Before I start writing, I spend a lot of time on an outline that will later guide me to find appropriate materials. Secondly, it is heartbreaking if the final product fails to get approval when it is shown to the public. I often start panicking after submission because I am not sure if the marker likes my essay and will give it a pass (Joyce, my trans. at her interview).
Week 8	**Writing is like learning swimming**. One of the important things is to familiarise oneself with basic skills and rules which let you build a foundation of learning swimming. At the moment, I am getting used to the specific writing conventions such as the use of hedging. When you know all the rules, writing can become something you are good at and the easier, more natural, it becomes (Joyce, orig. words).

After the second metaphor-centred teaching session in week 6, Joyce reconstructed her earlier non-metaphorical response by adopting the "Writing is like weaving" metaphor taken from a classroom activity, where the input was three texts written in English by Chinese undergraduate students (in China) discussing their personal metaphors of writing. She argued that the example

captured ideas she could identify with: "part of the 'weaving' metaphor is a very telling description of my writing at the moment" (Joyce, my trans. at her interview). In her statement, an explanation was offered regarding the key aspects of her metaphor, which were comparable to her writing:

1. The weaver (writer) needs to make a global plan and create a

    framework (an outline for writing)[4] at the beginning of the work;

2. The weaver (writer) carefully searches for material (writing resources)

    according to the weaver's/writer's plan;

3. The final product will be exhibited to and evaluated by other people

    (assessment of writing);

4. The weaver (writer) feels apprehensive about the result of the

    evaluation (the results of assessment).

It can be seen from these correspondences that the "weaving" metaphor highlighted the stages of planning and submission in Joyce's writing process. Firstly, what was accentuated at the planning stage includes the sequence of key steps (i.e., making an outline first, followed by intensive reading), and the guidance provided by the outline in searching for materials. The metaphor also indicates that Joyce spent considerable time on creating an outline. Secondly, feeling "heartbroken" due to a lack of approval of the public at the publishing stage vividly conveyed her anxiety about the markers' reaction to her essay, and her stress about achieving a passing grade.

At the second writing workshop in week 8, Joyce made reference to "learning swimming" metaphor to demonstrate her experience of writing the mid-term assignment[5] for her option module. Her follow-up explanation suggested that "learning swimming" and her writing were similar in several ways:

1. The learner (writer) needs to understand and grasp the basic skills

and rules (writing conventions);

2. Basic skills and rules (writing conventions) are the prerequisite of

managing the activity (her mid-term assignment);

3. It takes time to learn these skills and rules (writing conventions).

In these ways, the "learning swimming" metaphor not only addresses the significance of grasping the academic conventions, but also indicates that Joyce recognised this as a personal deficiency, and she therefore felt keen to learn them.

6.3 Term 1: Lucy's Elicited Metaphors

Lucy provided three elicited metaphors in Term 1. Her responses are set out in Table 6.3 below.

In week 4, Lucy shared her learning experience with regard to her handling of argumentation in one essay for her English Language Support (ELS)[6] class by borrowing her tutor's "writing is a tour" metaphor. It can be seen from her statement that writing an argument and "leading a tour" have at least four similarities:

1. The tour guide (the writer) takes a leading role in activities (her

ELS essay);

2. The tour guide (the writer) needs to have an awareness of the

audience (the readers);

3. There is some sort of interaction between the audience (the readers) and

the tour guide (the writer);

4. The tour guide's (writer's) main duty is to make his/her

meaning/thoughts (argument) easily understood by the audience (the

readers).

Looking at the similarities between the two, the aspects that the "tour" metaphor highlights about understanding the flow of argument are (a) the view of writing as a series of writers' responses to the anticipated reactions of readers, and (b) the ability to reflect on and exploit the reader's perspective when writing the text. The "tour" metaphor, as Lucy reported at her follow-up interview, offered an effective method of checking the flow of argument throughout the essay:

> It worked quite differently when I adopted the conception that writing was an interaction with readers. When I went back to the assignment and read it as a reader, I kept asking myself a set of questions such as "what are the conclusions in the two paragraphs that the author tried to draw?". Working this way, it becomes easy to pick up problems in argumentation (Lucy, my trans. at her interview in week 4).

Table 6.3 Lucy's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 1

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 4	…confused with the idea of 'a flow of argument' when I complete the first essay for ELS….I think **writing is a tour metaphor from my tutor worked well.** The writer, as a tour guide, is supposed to guide the reader read through the paper, get to know your ideas step by step and intimately help readers follow the argument easily…(Lucy, orig. words).
Week 6	**Writing is to transform a mental image into a visible picture**. The most important thing is to clarify the target image, but how to exhibit the image in a way that can represent the original meaning (i.e., what I thought) is problematic (Lucy, my trans. at her interview).

Week 8	**Part of my writing is like warming up in jogging,** doing a light aerobic exercise to loosen up cold muscles. In the mid-term assignment, I started with pre-writing, clearing ideas and thoughts about the main points to be made and simply putting down the key phrases/sentences to represent them. At this stage, you do not need to bother with writing norms, grammar, language style and the logical structure. Just write as much as you can and you may find it makes your ideas clearer and make yourself in a good state of writing (Lucy, orig. words).

After the second metaphor teaching session in week 6, Lucy adopted part of the "oil painting" metaphor taken from the in-class group analysis task to describe her writing. The revised "oil painting" metaphor made the intangible writing process visible, by stressing the transformation of ideas and thoughts. At her follow-up interview, she agreed that the links between "painting" and her writing were as follows:

1. The painter (writer) has to clarify the target image (the writer's conceptions/ideas).

2. There is a fair degree of difference between the final product (writing) and the original image (the writer's original conceptions/ideas).

3. It seems to be difficult for both writer and painter to make the final product in a way that represents the original image.

The above mappings imply that Lucy's writing difficulties could stem from: being unable to accurately voice her thoughts and ideas, and having difficulties in choosing how to present her thoughts and ideas in written English.

In week 8, Lucy commented on the process of writing her mid-term assignment by offering "writing is like warming up in jogging". Her follow-up

statement suggested the most relevant aspect of "jogging" to be mapped onto her writing was the hope that the pre-writing could function as a preliminary activity aimed at generating ideas (for the contents of the essay):

> In the process, I generated ideas from nothing. Then I found that I got additional thoughts and clarified the key points. Finally, I put them into a logical order (Lucy, orig. words at her interview).

She thus felt that the pre-writing would lead to an efficient process of drafting, as she put it "…make yourself in a good state of writing" (Lucy, orig. words in her statement).

6.4 Term 1: Sam's Elicited Metaphors

Sam's answers to the metaphor prompt in Term 1 are set out in Table 6.4 below. She failed to give an answer at the first prompting in week 4, due to a limited understanding of metaphor and uncertainty about the usefulness of metaphor creation.

After the first metaphor teaching session in week 5, Sam reported a clearer sense of metaphor (see section 5.5.1) and created her first metaphor of writing in terms of her ELS essay: "Writing is sitting in a roller coaster" (which goes up and down). In her metaphorical statement:

1. Her feeling of excitement on completion of the essay is metaphorically oriented 'up';

2. Her high expectation of the result is metaphorically oriented 'up';

3. Her sadness about the tutor's feedback is oriented 'down'.

Through the analysis of the mappings, it becomes evident that what is accentuated in the "rollercoaster" metaphor appears not to reflect aspects of her writing process, but instead to depict in a vivid way her extreme emotional change, due to a serious incongruity between the results she anticipated and her tutor's comments on her writing. The sadness also indicates that Sam tended not to be coping well with the tutor's critical comments. Hence, it seems to be necessary in this situation to offer her support in order to facilitate the use of feedback in a constructive way. Although the reason for the low grade of her essay was not made clear in her statement, given the marked difference between the tutor's opinion and Sam's expectations, it is assumed that her writing problems could stem from: her misunderstandings of the writing requirements/conventions, and her misinterpretation of the title question. To resolve the problem, improving student-tutor communication would seem to be one solution.

Table 6.4 Sam's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 1

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 4	No answer
Week 5	**Writing** (the **ELS essay) is like sitting in a rollercoaster.** I felt very excited after the submission. I was confident I would get a high grade. However, I did not expect the low grade and the harsh comments (from my tutor), which let me down (Sam, my trans. at her interview).
Week 8	**Writing (the mid-term assignment) likes practical driving test.** I cannot stop worrying the grade when I began writing essays. The result is at the mercy of the examiner. She/he will not be picky, if she/he wants me to pass (Sam, orig. words).

At the second writing workshop in week 8, Sam talked about a "practical driving test" while describing her mid-term assignment. She agreed with my preliminary analysis regarding how her "driving" metaphor could be likened to a driving test:

1. The nature of a driving test (writing an assignment) is to assess one's capacity (writing competence);

2. From the participant's perspective, the aim is to pass the assessment;

3. The result of a driving test (writing) is controlled by other people (tutors or markers);

4. The driver (the writer) is powerless in the situation;

5. The driving test (writing) is stressful due to the participant's anxiety about the result.

By examining the metaphorical correspondences between a "practical driving test" and her writing, the most relevant source aspect to be mapped onto the target is Sam's conception of a purpose of writing as being grading the assessment. At the same time, what is also highlighted by the metaphor is a feeling of worry about the result of the assessment. The reason for the anxiety, as reported by Sam, was the fact that "the result is at the mercy of the examiner…", which indicated the writer/driver felt powerless in both activities and strongly suggested a lack of self-confidence (in her English writing proficiency). It should be noted that Sam added her feeling of powerlessness (see point 4 above) at her follow-up interview. In the light of her addition, it seems reasonable to conclude that her view of writing as an examination-bound activity had a negative effect on her writing confidence and tended to increase her frustration level in writing.

6.5 Term 1: Tess's Elicited Metaphors

Tess's answers to the metaphor prompt in Term 1 are summarised in Table 6.5 below. In week 4, Tess provided a non-metaphorical evaluation "Writing is interesting…" at the first prompting and her answer was therefore excluded from the analysis.

Table 6.5 Tess's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 1

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 4	**…Writing is interesting** because I like the process of digging out evidences on both sides and reorganise the contents to defend myself (Tess, orig. words)
Week 5	**Sometimes writing is like preparing a compulsory task in a cooking competition.** To win the competition, all I have to do is first get familiar with the recipe and then follow it precisely, because it tells me what tastes good; secondly, I need to research the samples of the dishes, because this can show me how to use the recipe in great detail and clarify the proportion of the ingredients (Tess, my trans. at her interview).
Week 8	**Mid-term assignment is making a sandwich.** I adopt a three-paragraph model. Introduction and conclusion are two slices of bread. Between the two is the cooked meat which represents the main argument. To make the hamburger taste better, you need to add condiments among the three parts; Given someone may hate the stuff such onion or ginger, it is important to let the customer know what exactly the combination of the fillings are (Tess, orig. words).

Her first successful metaphor of writing was given in week 5, after the first metaphor teaching session. At her follow-up interview, she agreed that the

"cooking competition" metaphor was comparable to her writing in a number of ways:

1. The primary purpose is to win the competition (get a passing grade);

2. To be successful, the cook (the writer) must be clearly aware of the recipe/writing norms and strictly follow them in the actual performance;

3. Researching samples (reading other people's writing) seems to be an effective way to understand the recipes (writing conventions).

It can be seen from the mappings that, what is accentuated by the "cooking competition" includes obedience to the expected standard writing conventions and the usefulness of reading previous writing samples. To write a successful essay, a prerequisite was that, as Tess put it, the writer must be aware of "what tastes good" in writing. Similar to the focus of Joyce's "learning swimming" metaphor, the "cooking competition" metaphor once again addresses the significance of understanding academic writing norms and Tess identified this as a key deficiency. The difference is that, in the "cooking competition" metaphor, Tess managed to offer a solution. By means of "researching the samples of the dishes", she seemed to believe that she could create a good-tasting essay. This interpretation was confirmed by Tess at her follow-up interview. She commented positively on the use of previous students' essays at her first group supervision and considered that reading previous students' writing samples worked reasonably well in helping her recognise how to apply standard writing conventions in actual writing. In addition, Tess perceived her writing, as she reported at her follow-up interview, as a competitive process, because her primary purpose was "to win the competition". Compared with Joyce's "writing is weaving" and Sam's "writing is a practical

driving test" metaphors, which contained the same metaphorical foregrounding of the writer's tension about the result of the essay, Tess's reaction in her "cooking" metaphor indicated a little more confidence in writing, focusing on creating a writing solution; both Joyce and Sam only highlighted their anxiety about writing.

In week 8, Tess made reference to "making a sandwich" when describing her mid-term assignment. A discussion with Tess at her follow-up interview confirmed that the following aspects of the source (a sandwich) were mapped onto the target (mid-term assignment):

1. Like a sandwich, Tess's assignment adopts a three-part structure (introduction, arguments, and conclusion);

2. To make the hamburger taste delicious (improve the writer's arguments), it is necessary to add condiments (transitions) among the three parts.

3. From a customer's point of view (from the reader's perspective), it is important to clarify the combination of the fillings (state the writer's position about the subject matter).

Looking at these mappings above, the aspects of Tess's writing highlighted by the "sandwich" metaphor are the use of transitional devices (i.e., transition words/sentences) to improve the arguments, and the importance of making the writer's position stand out. From her perspective, the writing would be likely to go wrong, if either of the two aspects were neglected.

Tess added (at her interview) that "adding condiments among the three parts" was metaphorically mapped onto using transitions in her writing, for the purpose of improving her arguments:

You may need to announce to your reader a change in your argument or

you want to emphasise one of your points. In all these cases, transition markers such as expressions or sentences can help readers understand your arguments (Tess, my trans. at her interview).

It is fair to say that the connection between "adding condiments" and using transitions was fairly opaque. Without Tess's explanation, at her interview, it seems difficult, from her written metaphorical statement, to link the function of adding condiments to connecting the three parts in Tess's writing, (namely, introduction, arguments and conclusion) by using transitions.

6.6 Term 1: Tina's Elicited Metaphors

Tina's answers to the metaphor prompt in Term 1 are summarised in Table 6.6 below.

Table 6.6 Tina's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 1

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 4	**I think writing an essay is a process.** It helped me practise a lot of skills at different stages which I need for the final MA dissertation (Tina, orig. words).
Week 4	**Writing is a mining.** A good essay relies on sufficient resources. You have to search the resources, eliminate anything irrelevant and refine what you have found, in order to make the raw stuff suitable for use. You have to bear in mind that it takes time. The bibliography of a journal paper is of great value, because it contains quite a lot of useful materials in the relevant area and therefore could make the searching easier. **Writing is also like a driving test.** I would feel worried of whether I could get a licence (Tina, my trans. at her interview).

Week 6	I agree with the **'writing is hand-weaving' metaphor** about 'getting some inspiration from others' weaving' and then revising the outline. But I have a problem with transforming other people's ideas, because of the worry of plagiarism (Tina, my trans. at her interview).
Week 8	**Writing (mid-term assignment) is like making a jigsaw puzzle.** I know what I want to say, but I always had a problem with the presentation of my ideas in English. I first wrote down the key words/phrases in order not to affect the flow of writing, which is like, in the jigsaw game, finding all required pieces. Then, I put these words together to construct each single point. Like in the game, I need to make all the small chunks fit together into several units such as a person's head and nose. Finally, these single points were arranged in a reasonable sequence. In the jigsaw game, it's time to pull these small chunks together (Tina, orig. words).

It has been argued earlier (see section 5.3.2), that Tina's response around "writing is a process" created in week 4 of Term 1 was extremely vague, in that it was difficult to tell in her follow-up explanation the specific aspects of her writing, which were related to her metaphor (e.g., "a lot of skills" and "at different stages"), and her logic for creating the metaphor. To clarify Tina's intended meaning regarding her "process" metaphor, it was therefore decided to ask her to give an explanation at the follow-up interview in week 4, which was primarily designed to discuss participants' problems and/or difficulties with the metaphor prompt. Tina concretised the "process" to "mining" (see Table 6.6 below). It can be seen from her statement that "mining" could be linked to her writing as follows:

1. The miner (the writer) has to search for something of value (writing sources including examples and evidence in a subject area);

2. They both have to eliminate unwanted stuff (irrelevant/poor quality

writing sources);

3. The miner (the writer) has to look for a long time before he/she finds anything useful;

4. Mining (writing) is time-consuming.

It also can be seen from the mappings above that the "mining" metaphor stresses the difficulty of searching for sources and the toil required to refine what is mined. The "mining" metaphor also reveals that her writing problems could stem from the failure to (a) find sufficient resources/writing ideas and/or (b) extract useful/relevant resources from reading. To resolve the latter problem, Tina suggested using the 'References' from journal papers as a way of narrowing the search.

At her follow-up interview, apart from adding information to her "process" metaphor, Tina also described her new view of writing in terms of a "driving test". Similar to Sam's "writing is like a practical driving test" (see section 6.4), Tina again showed a lack of confidence in her ability to write well.

After the second metaphor-based teaching session in week 6 of Term 1, Tina borrowed the "weaving" metaphor taken from an in-class group analysis task (see Appendix 20). She focused on the idea that one could learn from other people's work; however, what worried her most was using someone else's original work into her own without plagiarism.

In week 8, "writing is making a jigsaw puzzle" was used to describe how Tina resolved her problem with presenting her written ideas in her mid-term assignment. At her interview, she agreed with my analysis of her metaphor that there were at least four ways in which the "jigsaw" metaphor could connect to her writing:

1. The player (the writer) has a clear awareness of the target image (the

writer's written ideas);

2. The player (the writer) starts by identifying all the required small pieces (key words/phrases in writing);

3. They both need to assemble the small pieces (phrases/ideas) and make them (the writer's individual points) fit together;

4. All chunks are pulled together (arrange the writer's single points into a sequenced argument).

Looking at these mappings, the "jigsaw puzzle" metaphor accentuates (a) the clarification of the writer's written ideas at the beginning of writing, (b) the assembly of key words/expressions to construct the writer's individual points, and (c) the arrangement of the writer's written ideas, all of which appear to capture a 'recursive' feature of Tina's writing process. Similar to Lucy's "warming up in jogging" metaphor created in week 8 of Term 1, Tina seemed to have a similar understanding that it was counterproductive to concentrate over much on the stylistic requirements, such as grammar, vocabulary fluency and accuracy.

6.7 Term 1: Wendy's Elicited Metaphors

Wendy's responses to the metaphor completion task are summarised in Table 6.7 below. In week 4, Wendy saw herself as a fashion show designer, comparing her ELS essay with the preparation for a fashion show. From her point of view, the aspects of "designing a fashion show" were mapped onto her writing at least in four ways:

1. The show designer (the writer) needs to think about his/her audiences (show an awareness of the readers' perspective);

2. The show designer (the writer) needs to create a global plan of the activities (an outline of the article including the subheadings);

3. The show designer (the writer) waits for the "aha moment" (collect

enough evidence after much reading) before starting the work (writing)

4. Having comments/feedback from others (peers or tutors) is helpful at

the revision stage.

An examination of these connections shows that the metaphor accentuates two writing stages: planning and revising, with special foci on having an awareness of readers' perspectives, the importance of making an outline, seeking help from peers or tutors, and waiting for the Eureka moment.

In her written statement, three self-identified writing problems were also reported. The first two problems had to do with the planning stage in which she felt frustrated about deciding on the thesis statement, and creating an outline. The reason reported at her follow-up interview was due to the difficulty of understanding the title question. In addition, waiting for the Eureka moment that is, "I start writing when I collect enough evidence after a long-time reading", she felt, could be problematic, especially when "the deadline is fast approaching".

Table 6.7 Wendy's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 1

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 4	The process of writing (I mean the essay in ELS) is like **designing a fashion show**. First, I must clarify **what I wanted to show the audiences** and how I will **plan the event (an outline of the article including the subheadings**). Then I get my first draft (which is also a draft scheme of the show). To improve my design, I certainly need comments/feedback from other team members (like **getting comments from friends or tutors**). I feel the initial stages, that is, **making decisions on the thesis statement and creating outline are quite difficult as it takes time to decide where the writing will go.** I only start writing when I collect enough evidence after a long-time reading. **It is likes the "aha moment" for designers.** But I don't think it can work if the deadline is fast approaching (Wendy, orig. words).
Week 6	In the **writing is like driving** metaphor, the use of a map when the driver gets lost made me think that I should always remember the key points in the outline that I want an essay to show to the audience, as this would certainly help me get back on the right track when I get lost during composing (Wendy, my trans. at her interview).
Week 8	In the feedback of my mid-term essay, **my tutor considered that I added too many unnecessary ingredients that badly affected the flavour.** My feeling is **my tutor was not sure what the original flavour in the dish was.** I should have carefully refined/arranged ideas in my outline next time (Wendy, orig. words).

After the second metaphor teaching session in week 6, Wendy reacted positively to the "writing is driving" taken from the in-class group analysis task (see Table 6.7). The use of a map when "driving" was metaphorically mapped

onto returning to the outline made her recognise the importance of the outline, which, she felt could usefully resolve her confusion about writing at the composing stage.

In week 8, Wendy used two metaphorical expressions relevant to cooking, following the feedback of her mid-term assignment. In her metaphorical expression of "adding ingredients", the most relevant source aspect to be mapped onto the target was the fact that mixing unnecessary ingredients (i.e., irrelevant writing ideas) seriously destroyed the flavour in the cooking (i.e., the main ideas and arguments in the essay). Her second metaphorical expression, "my tutor was not sure what the original flavour in the dish was" was related to the tutor's reaction to her writing. This again reinforced the fact that her main ideas and arguments had been too vague to identify. Wendy seemed to acknowledge the cause of the problem, indicating an intention to refine and arrange her writing ideas at the outlining stage in future writing.

6.8 Term 1: Zara's Elicited Metaphors

Zara's responses to the metaphor completion task are summarised in Table 6.8 below. At the first prompting in week 4, "writing is like preparation for study abroad" was excluded from the analysis, because Zara did not provide an metaphorical entailment. It was thus difficult to identify the mappings of aspects of the source (i.e., preparation for study abroad) onto the target (i.e., her writing), and to interpret her intended meaning.

Table 6.8 Zara's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 1

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 4	…essay writing (in ELS) made me think of preparation for study abroad that is full of both excitement and anxiousness. I cannot give a specific reason (Zara, orig. words).
Week 5	**Writing at the moment is like using a travel adaptor.** An electrical outlet in the UK has three pins, which do not fit my laptop. So I have to use an adaptor, if I want to use my laptop in the UK. In the case of writing, what I learnt about writing in China, I think, clearly did not completely fit the new writing requirements here. So I have to learn how to employ UK standard writing conventions in my writing (Zara, my trans. at her interview).
Week 8	**I feel writing the mid-term assignment like what doctor wrote in the prescription**, which contains quite a lot big words and sounds professional. I spent much time on collecting academic vocabulary/expressions from reading and imitating the way to construct my meaning. I did not completely understand all that I put in the sentences. But I know that is good academic writing (Zara, orig. words).

After the first metaphor teaching session in week 5, Zara added new ideas to the "preparation for study" metaphor that was created in week 4. The modified statement likened her writing to the concrete image of using a "travel adaptor". The source was the traveller (the writer) who made sense of the inconsistency of the electrical outlet (writing conventions) between the home country (China) and her travel destination (England). The process of learning new writing conventions was described as "using a travel adaptor". Zara's statement in week 5 seemed to suggest that she was clearer about the discrepancies between academic writing in the two different writing contexts. As she said at her follow-up interview:

I start to make sense the differences between what I learnt about academic writing in China and the expected academic writing standards such as the use of hedging and limiting the use of first pronoun "I", which have not been taught in university (Zara, orig. words).

Zara thus recognised her deficiency with respect to the new writing conventions but as a result felt keen to learn them.

In week 8, Zara compared her mid-term assignment to a doctor's prescription, which, to borrow her words, "contains quite a lot big words and sounds professional". What is highlighted in the metaphorical construction, based on her statement, is the need for academic vocabulary. To investigate why she connected "big words" with academic vocabulary, Zara was asked to offer an explanation at her interview in week 5. From her point of view, apart from doctors and people in relevant disciplines, it appeared to be difficult for people without expertise (such as the patient) to make sense of a prescription. In a similar vein, academic writing was treated as rule-bound practice, requiring a set of special vocabulary items. The use of "big words" was to differentiate terms in daily use from terms in prescription, which were only understood by people in specific academic areas. In her written statement, Zara explicated her approach to learning academic vocabulary, as a means of "collecting academic vocabulary/expressions from reading and imitating the way to construct my meaning". Her method of learning vocabulary seemed to work reasonably well, she felt, although she considered it time-consuming.

6.9 Term 1: Group Discussion about Personal Metaphors

At the third writing workshop in week 10, participants were asked to share with

their classmates the metaphors of writing they had created throughout Term 1. The intention was to explore how far participants could learn from other people's metaphors. Participants' responses to the group discussion were collected from classroom observation (see Appendix 14), field notes and individual follow-up interviews (see Appendix 11). Participants' reactions to the group discussion are set out in Table 6.9 below.

It can be seen from Table 6.9 that the group discussion of participants' personal metaphors of writing was largely successful. Based on the observation of the group discussion and their comments at their follow-up interviews, sharing and discussing their metaphors of writing had several benefits.

Table 6.9 Topics in Participants' Reactions to the Group Discussion of Metaphors in Term 1

Reactions to the group discussion / Participants	Identified writing problems/ difficulty	Generated new views of writing	Built support between students	Formulated the plans of actions to change their writing
Joyce	✓		✓	✓
Lucy			✓	✓
Sam	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tess	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tina			✓	✓
Wendy			✓	✓
Zara	✓		✓	✓

Note: '✓' flags the topics about which participants made positive comments at their individual follow-up interviews after the group discussion of personal metaphors of writing.

Firstly, five participants (Joyce, Tina, Sam, Zara and Wendy) reported that

the group discussion helped them identify their personal writing problems. Three of the five participants (Joyce, Tina and Sam) came to realise that the extreme anxiety they were feeling with regard to the results of their essays was an affective barrier to writing. Their emotional reactions were most evident, when they discussed "writing is like a (practical) driving test" (Sam and Tina), "writing is like sitting in a rollercoaster" (Sam), and "writing is like weaving" (Joyce). All of these metaphors foregrounded writing as an assessment-based activity. The students felt that such a concept of writing led to increased anxiety and, consequently, decreased productivity. Thus, Sam explained how her anxiety about her grade seriously delayed her writing progress:

> Sometime, I think I was psychopathic. I find it's hard to focus on writing and I just could not stopping think the result. I spent two days on reading the handbook and asked three last-year students in order to collect the information about how to compensate if I failed the essays. I now think it is a waste of time (Sam, orig. words at her interview).

Zara's "Writing is like what doctor wrote in the prescription" also made all the participants reflect on their experiences with refining language. Four of them (Sam, Tess and Joyce and Zara) recognised that an over-emphasis on word choice and vocabulary issues at the composing stage seemed to seriously block thinking about the topic at hand. For instance, Zara responded to the problem by adding new comments to her "prescription" metaphor in week 8:

Refining language while composing could destroy the flow of writing. When drafting the mid-term assignment, I stopped to search for a few phrases that I had found in a book. After five minutes, I could not actually remember how I was trying to present my ideas in writing (Zara, my trans. extracted from my field notes).

The second benefit highlighted by all participants, was that sharing metaphors of writing built up their writing confidence. Those who did not create emotion-focused metaphors (Lucy, Tess, Wendy, Zara and Tina), nevertheless all felt that these anxiety-related metaphors (e.g., "writing is like practical driving test) adequately represented their feelings. The views on writing they were recognising as similar to their own were written by people in their own community of practice. As Sam put it in her reaction to the group discussion:

It is a big relief, as everyone in this group experienced stress. It is good to know we had some common writing problems, such as refining language and establishing argument. In additional, it seems that we had varying levels of difficulty in academic writing adjustment. I was not stupid as I previously thought (Sam, orig. words at her interview).

The third effect had to do with the awareness of new views of writing reported by Sam and Tess, who said that the process of sharing and discussing personal metaphors led to a reconstruction of their view of writing. For instance, Tess liked Tina's "writing is like making a jigsaw puzzle" and adopted it as her own because she considered that the metaphor suggested a sensible view of transforming the writer's written thoughts into words, which, she felt, could

effectively resolve her problem with constructing written ideas. Sam explained how her view of writing changed from "writing is a sitting in a rollercoaster" to "writing an assignment is a sort of learning with the tutor's support" (Sam, my trans. extracted from her interview):

> I agree with my classmates' comments on my "rollercoaster" metaphor. I had thought the tutor's comments in the feedback of my ELS essay were too harsh to take and did not effectively make use of the suggestions from my tutor. Later, I found the same mistakes in my mid-term assignment. I now know feedback is valuable for learning how to write. The tutor has to be critical, picking up the problems to help me improve my writing (Sam, my trans. of her interview).

By sharing and discussing personal metaphors, all participants not only recognised that they benefited from learning about other people's writing experiences, but indicated their intention of formulating plans of action to change their writing. Firstly, six participants (Zara, Joyce, Sam, Tina, Tess and Wendy) reacted positively to Lucy's "writing is like a tour" metaphor, as they came to realise that it was of great importance to pay attention to the reader's perspective. For example, Zara explained the way that she would make use of the reader's perspectives at the revising stage:

> Lucy's metaphor made me feel the difference in writing with and without the reader's perspectives, which, I think could be really helpful when refining and tightening up the argument at the revising stage. From a reader's perspective, he or she may feel something is unclear which,

however, the writer had thought was adequate. I will read my essay as a reader and hopefully I can find the gaps/logical errors in the argument (Zara, field notes. my trans.)

Lucy, Sam and Tina claimed to have realised from Tess's "writing is making a sandwich" the importance of establishing links between paragraphs, which were neglected in their writing:

The image "adding sauce in a sandwich" helped me quickly visualise the concept of writing coherence. To improve the flow of argument in writing, apart from focusing on reader's perspective in my "tour" metaphor, I will think about establishing and checking the links between paragraphs in my future writing (Lucy, orig. words at her interview).

Secondly, three participants (Lucy, Wendy and Joyce) commented that making reference to previous students' essays, based on the idea of "researching the samples" in Tess's "writing is a cooking" metaphor, could help them make sense of the requirements of writing conventions in the UK and understand the expected writing standards:

I quite like Tess's idea of making referencing to previous students' essays to clarify the writing norms. It is much more straightforward to understand what exactly "Sources well-integrated into the overall argument" refer to, compared to merely reading the handbook (Wendy, interview, orig. words).

Those who had a problem with transforming and integrating writing ideas

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due to language-related difficulties (Joyce, Sam, Tess and Zara) were particularly strong adherents to Lucy's "writing is like warming up in jogging" and/or Tina's "writing is like making a jigsaw puzzle" metaphors, which reinforced the idea that writing was a recursive, multiple-step activity. They came to see that language should not be treated as a particular concern at the composing stage and considered that the jigsaw-like writing approach could reduce the distraction stemming from too much exploring of vocabulary/expressions:

> Tina's metaphor made me think about during what part of the writing process I ought to refine language. Clearly, it is not the right time to worry vocabulary at the composing stage, particularly, when you are generating your written ideas (Joyce, interview, orig. words).

6.10 Term 1: Summary

To sum up the results in Term 1, the seven participants' elicited metaphors of writing conveyed vividly distinctive individual conceptualisations of aspects of their writing processes, including their thoughts about, feelings towards, personal deficiencies in and approaches to academic writing.

There was a general acknowledgement from all participants that by hearing and critiquing other people's personal metaphors of writing, they had learnt from their classmates' metaphors and they explained the ways that, in their interviews, the group discussion had proved useful. These included (a) identifying individuals' personal writing problems/difficulties, (b) generating new views of writing, (c) building support between students, and (d) formulating plans of action to change their writing.

The results also suggested that participants did not always create metaphors with appropriate systematic mappings between a source and a target (i.e., various aspects of their writing); the set of metaphorical correspondences, in their metaphors, were not always explicit (i.e., Zara's "preparation for study abroad" metaphor) or reasonably established (i.e., Tess's "sandwich" metaphor). Without participants' explanations at their follow-up interviews, it is almost impossible to resolve the problem of vague correspondences. As discussed in section 4.9.1, the aim of the interviews was to explore what participants meant regarding their metaphors, rather than engaging in a critical dialogue about the aptness or accuracy of their metaphors by asking for explanations or asking them to argue with my preliminary analysis; therefore I did not flag the poor and/or inappropriate mappings within metaphors, as long as participants' gave an explicit account of why they had selected specific metaphors.

As a final methodological note, participants in the Term 1 follow-up interviews generally accepted my interpretations of their intended meanings with respect to their metaphorical statements. The follow-up interviewing, as a validation technique, worked reasonably well in both clarifying the ambiguous metaphorical mappings in participants' metaphorical statements (e.g., Zara's "preparation for study abroad" metaphor) and modifying my preliminary analysis when participants' intended meanings were incongruent with my initial interpretations (e.g., the metaphorical highlighting of the feeling of powerlessness was not included in my analysis of Sam's "practical driving test" metaphor).

Notes to Chapter Six

[1] As noted in section 4.8.2.2, the sets of interviews had two main functions: firstly, they were used to (a) examine students' understanding of metaphor and (b) explore their problems/difficulties with the metaphor prompt. The second function was to investigate why students chose specific metaphors to describe their writing. The results of students' understanding of metaphor and their problems/difficulties with the metaphor prompt have been discussed in Chapter 5 (see sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.3); this chapter concentrates on the second function.

[2] The results of 'Learning to Use Metaphor' Training have been discussed in Chapter 5.

[3] The full responses to the metaphor elicitation task at the first writing workshop in week 4 are set out in Table 5.3 (see section 5.3.2). This chapter only presents the metaphor selected and its entailments.

[4] Hereafter, the contents in the brackets represent the aspects of participants' writing (i.e., the target items).

[5] In term 1, all full-time MA students are expected to complete a mid-term essay for formative assessment as part of their option module. This is shorter than a full assignment, although the precise length is left up to the tutor. The nature of the assignment can vary, from a short essay with a similar structure to an assignment to a critical review of an article. Some tutors give a numerical mark; others just gave comments.

[6] The Centre for English Language Teaching (CELT) runs English language support courses in all three terms for international students on MA programmes. These courses aim at helping students improve their English and developing the academic skills that they need to study successfully on their MA courses.

Chapter 7   Main Study: Conceptualisations of Academic Writing in Term 2

7.1 Preamble

This chapter presents the findings of seven students' metaphorical conceptualisations of their academic writing in Term 2 (from section 7.2 to section 7.8) and their reactions to the second group discussion of individuals' personal metaphors (section 7.9), followed by a brief summary (section 7.10).

Three writing workshops were arranged in Term 2 (see Table 7.1). The aim of the first two workshops (in weeks 2 & 6) was to collect participants' metaphors of writing. Given the fact that students had submitted their two autumn assignments[1] in week 1 of Term 2, it was decided in workshop 4 (in week 2) to ask them to think of a metaphor(s) in terms of writing their autumn assignments. Similar to in Term 1, individual follow-up interviews were arranged after each round of metaphor collection, allowing participants to offer an explanation for choosing specific metaphors, in order to improve the accuracy of my analysis of their metaphors. In addition, participants were asked to comment on whether and how far they had implemented the 'actions', which had been proposed after the first group discussion of personal metaphors in Term 1. In workshop 6 (in week 10), students were asked to share and discuss individuals' personal metaphors; they were also invited to attend individual interviews, which were designed to investigate the impacts of the metaphor-based group discussion on their writing.

It should be noted that in the following summary tables of participants' metaphors, the data from their written statements are the participants' original words but the follow-up interview extracts are again my translations. Bold type highlights the metaphor selected.

Table 7.1 Data Collection in Term 2

Term 2	Contents	Method(s)
Week 2	Workshop 4: Collected participants' metaphors	Collection of written responses Interviews
Weeks 6	Workshop 5: Collected participants' metaphors	Collection of written responses Interviews
Week 10	Workshop 6: Group discussion of personal metaphors	Classroom observations Interviews

7.2 Term 2: Joyce's Elicited Metaphors

Joyce's answers to the metaphor prompt in weeks 2 and 6 are summarised in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Joyce's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 2

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 2	**Writing is like warming up in jogging**. There is no need to worry the vocabulary choice and the writing conventions. I firstly put down anything I could think of including a single word or a few expressions in Chinese then translated them into English to form the texts. The pre-writing made a good preparation for exploring ideas and activating my mind for follow-up writing (Joyce, orig. words).
Week 6	**Writing is like making a necklace and writer is a jewellery designer**. My every argument in the assignment is like a bead I am threading onto a necklace. It is rather important to plan the general shape and form and decide how to string these beads, if I want the final product attractive. In the case of writing, the structure of writing can decide if the author's overall argument could be neatly expressed (Joyce, orig. words).

In week 2, Joyce adopted Lucy's "writing is like warming up in jogging" metaphor to describe the process of generating her written ideas at the pre-writing stage for her two autumn assignments, involving making notes of her written ideas in Chinese and translating them into English. What the "jogging" metaphor accentuates is generating ideas for the contents without worrying about rhetorical refining (vocabulary choice), and writing conventions led, she felt, to an efficient process of drafting, in that it "…made a good preparation for exploring ideas and activating my mind for follow-up writing" (Joyce, orig. words). It also can be seen from her statement that the strategy of translating from L1 (Chinese) to L2 (English), worked reasonably well in helping her construct written ideas.

The reason for adopting Lucy's "jogging" metaphor had, as she reported at her follow-up interview, to do with the group discussion of individuals' metaphors in Term 1. She abandoned the idea of making sure everything was written down correctly the first time and came to realise that "the distraction stemming from too much exploring of vocabulary/expressions seemed to account for why I was repeatedly getting blocked at the composing stage" (Joyce, my trans. at her interview).

Joyce added new comments at her interview concerning Tina's "writing is like making a jigsaw puzzle". She considered the 'jigsaw-like' approach inapplicable to her two autumn assignments, although it reinforced the same idea (as highlighted by the "jogging" metaphor) that writing was indeed a process of discovering and making meaning:

> Tina's "jigsaw" metaphor does not fit my writing, as I had no frame of a complete picture, when I started the two assignments resulting from my unfamiliarity with the topics. In a jigsaw puzzle box, the cover has

already provided a complete view of the target image, such as a house or a boat. In my case, I had no idea of what I was going to write and the conclusions I would draw. Even though I had some preliminary thoughts, I was not sure if these ideas could be well integrated under the title of the assignments, due to my unfamiliarity with the subject areas (Joyce, my trans. at her interview).

It can be seen from this explanation that the unclear sense of what writing assignments would entail seems to account of her not adopting the "jigsaw" metaphor to describe her writing. This position was in fact fairly predictable, based on her comments at the interview, about a lack of background knowledge of the subject areas.

In week 6, Joyce saw herself as a jewellery designer, comparing her writing to making a necklace. Her statement showed that there were at least two ways in which her writing could be linked to necklace making:

1. The designer (writer) has to decide on the general shape and form (the structure of writing) before stringing the beads (the writer's arguments);

2. The shape and the form of the beads have a great influence on the quality of the necklace (conveying the writer's overall argument).

Looking at these mappings, the "necklace" metaphor highlights the structure of writing, and its vital role in conveying the author's argument effectively. According to her accounts at her interview, the reason for selecting the "necklace" metaphor had to do with a supervision meeting with her ESL tutor in Term 1. Her tutor flagged the problem with weak structure, including constructing paragraphs and organising the argument in her ESL essay via the

statement "the wire of the necklace had broken and thus I could not string the beads together" (Joyce, my trans. at her interview). The lesson for Joyce was the realisation that "my arguments in the essay were not logically connected" (Joyce, my trans. at her interview) and the tutor's "necklace" metaphor, she thought, reinforced the need for connection.

With reference to Joyce's proposed changes in her writing after the group discussion in Term 1, Lucy's "tour" metaphor, which highlighted the awareness of the reader's perspective and needs had, she felt, helped her edit her arguments "…having the reader's perspectives in mind, I can edit the argument by filling the gaps, or finding the flaws, which have been carelessly overlooked" (Joyce, my trans. at her interview).

7.3 Term 2: Lucy's Elicited Metaphors

Lucy's responses to the metaphor prompt in weeks 2 and 6 are set out in Table 7.3 below.

Table 7.3 Lucy's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 2

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 2	**Writing (the literature review) is like making a documentary film (for example about the whale).** The contents should not only cover the background knowledge such as what the present research has found with respect to their living habits, species, and evolution but also more importantly should present the areas which are worth exploring, for instance the causes for whale stranding. This will help the audience have a global understanding of whale and importantly make sense the outlook for the research of whale (Lucy, orig. words)

Week 6	**Writing is like designing a temple.** It is more about presenting the writer's argument on how the writer thinks about the topic. The first step is to build the foundation that supports the entire structure of the house. This step requires the writer to determine the premise. The second step is to plan how many pillars are needed that run all the way from the ground to the roof. At this stage, the writer needs to consider how may sub-points are needed. Next, it's time to select the construction materials for the main building. The writer has to decide what sorts of evidence to be used to build the argument. Finally, it's time to build a roof. This asks the writer to identify her overall argument (Lucy, orig. words).

In week 2, Lucy shared her experience of writing a literature review in her autumn assignments by employing the "making a documentary film about a whale" metaphor (see Table 7.3). Based on her account, the objects of making a documentary film could be mapped onto writing a literature review as follows:

1. Presenting the audiences (readers) with what has been found about whales, such as species and living habits (what previous research has said about the current context in which the research topic has been situated);

2. Indentifying topics such as the causes of becoming stranded, which need to be further investigated (gaps and problems in the literature).

It can be seen from the mappings above that the "documentary" metaphor conveys Lucy's comprehension of the function of a literature review, and her appreciation of the reader's needs. Her statement also implies that the writer needs to identify the research gaps and problems in the literature review. The reason, as she put it at her interview, was to provide a rationale for her writing and to

establish her thesis statement, based on the gaps/problems identified in the relevant research.

Turning to her responses to the changes she had proposed to make in her writing after the group discussion in Term 1, Lucy thought Tess's "making a sandwich" metaphor was helpful, reminding her to examine the logical links among her points and the paragraphs in her two autumn assignments.

In week 6, Lucy chose "designing a temple" metaphor, which, based on her statement, had at least four reasons:

1. The first step is to build a solid foundation (the premise used as evidence);

2. The designer (writer) should decide on the number of pillars (the writer's points);

3. The designer needs to select the material (the array of supporting evidence);

4. The last step is to attach a roof (the writer's overall argument) to the building.

Lucy added comments at her interview with respect to the source of this metaphor. She had taken the "designing a temple" metaphor from a textbook on L2 writing, as she felt that it vividly depicted the aspects that a good argument should cover and made her recognise the functions of the different elements within an argument. She came to see that she had mistakenly treated the overall argument purely from the author's perspective.

7.4 Term 2: Sam's Elicited Metaphors

Sam's metaphors of writing created at the first two workshops in Term 2 are summarised in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4 Sam's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 2

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 2	**Writing is like making a plan for weight loss.** Although I have tried planning things down to the detail, such as the exercise to exercise and diet eating plan, working out the daily calorie, what comes out of was often unexpected and certainly not to my liking. The unexpected consequence is I put on weight; but I don't know how to revise the weight-loss plan. In the case of writing, what irritated me most was I found it difficult to make the outline fit with my written ideas which come along in writing. I don't know what to do next (Sam, orig. words).
Week 6	**Writing an argument is like join in a debate.** To make your opponent convince what you say, you should not only provide the evidence but also include your own evaluation of the evidence, showing how the evidence could be used to support your position (Sam, orig. words).

In week 2, Sam made reference to her experience of "making a plan for weight loss" metaphor, while describing writing her two autumn assignments. Looking at her statement, the following aspects of making a weight-loss plan were related to her writing:

1. A self-identified detailed plan (outline) was made before starting

   to lose weight (writing);

2. There was a serious unexpected incongruity between what had been

   planned (the outline) and what actually happened, such as a gain in

   weight (the actual writing);

3. How to resolve the incongruity by making changes to the preconceived

   weight-loss plan (revisions of the outline) seems problematic.

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What can be drawn from the mappings is that Sam's outline failed to mirror her writing process, due to an unresolvable problem with adjusting the outline to fit what she wanted to express. To find out what caused the unexpected incongruity and why making changes to the preconceived plan was unmanageable, Sam was asked to offer an explanation at her interview:

Some sudden ideas (like the tip of an iceberg) made me notice that what I wanted to say did not quite fit the outline. I rechecked the outline and the title of the assignment. I realised that my original understanding of the title was wrong. It was rather unexpected, exactly as I reacted to the weight gain. I did not know how to amend the outline to achieve the goals of the assignment. Clearly, I was on the wrong track (Sam, my trans. at her interview).

Sam's spontaneous (or in her words "sudden") ideas that were metaphorically mapped onto "the tip of an iceberg" seemed rather unexpected. For her, they could be indicative of the flaws either in the outline or in her understanding of the title of the assignment. Rechecking the title made her realise that her initial interpretation was wrong. Indeed, Sam admitted that she did not have a clear sense of "what did the title really want me to do?" (Sam, my trans. at her interview). She therefore expressed the intention in her future writing of assessing the characteristics of written tasks before she started to write.

Turning to her response to her proposed changes in writing after the group discussion in Term 1, Sam gave up "spending time on choosing the most appropriate expressions to convey her meaning" (Sam, my trans. at her interview). Instead, she reported that she had concentrated much on generating ideas for the

contents and, with this in mind, considered Lucy's "warming up in jogging" metaphor more applicable to her writing, than Tina's "making a jigsaw puzzle" metaphor. Like Joyce, they both recognised a lack of background knowledge of the subject areas, which stopped them having "a clear sense of what to write and the points I wanted to make" (Sam, my trans. at her interview) before they started writing. However, to both of them, having an awareness, at the start of writing, of what to write at a general level, or to borrow Sam's words "be clear about the overall picture of writing" (Sam, my trans. at her interview) is just what the "making a jigsaw puzzle" highlights.

In week 6, the "joining in a debate" metaphor was used to construct Sam's concept of argument. What the metaphorical 'debate' accentuated is the writer's engagement with the evidence by presenting his/her own evaluation. At her interview, she referred to the feedback that she had received from her ESL tutor about her argument: "The argument in the essay is too descriptive, like telling stories. I cannot see your analysis…" (Sam, my trans. at her interview). She reacted positively to the feedback. A significant lesson for Sam was the realisation that her argument tended to rely too heavily on presenting the evidence. She felt the metaphorical 'telling a story' reinforced this realisation and helped her improve her understanding of argument, in a way like 'joining in a debate'.

7.5 Term 2: Tess's Elicited Metaphors

Tess's metaphors of writing created at the two workshops in Term 2 are set out in Table 7.5 below.

Table 7.5 Tess's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 2

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 2	**Writing is like making necklace.** My duties are to design the shape and form of the necklace and string these beads. In my writing, I need to make sure the contents are logically connected (Tess, orig. words).
Week 6	**Revising is like cleaning dust**, after reconstruction of a house. You have to be really careful about every corner to keep the house shining. In writing, I normally read sentence by sentence in order to find the grammar/vocabulary error. The purpose is to smooth the language and ultimately make the texts pleasant to read with no errors (Tess, orig. words).

In week 2, Tess compared her writing to the process of making a necklace. A general impression of her metaphorical statement is that not all correspondences between the source (making a necklace) and the target (writing) are stated explicitly. For example, it is unclear the "contents" in her writing that was metaphorically mapped onto the "beads". At her interview, it was therefore decided to ask her to offer an explanation for the metaphorical correspondences. She agreed with my preliminary interpretation of "designing the shape and form of the necklace" as corresponding to planning the overall organisation of her writing, but she disagreed about my interpretation of "beads", as a set of her individual arguments that she connected to form her overall points:

Each bead represented an argument. I needed to make them logically connected, in the hope that readers could easily understand the key points that I wanted to make (Tess, my trans. at her interview).

It should be noted that her account of the incongruity between my analysis and her intended meaning of "beads" allowed her to recognise her omission of logical links between her arguments in her autumn assignments. She accordingly expressed her intention to improve this in her future writing:

I did not plan the arrangement of my individual arguments, such as which should come first. Offering readers a clue to the arrangement of the arguments could help them understand my key points easily. I will think about it in my next essay/assignment (Tess, my trans. at her interview).

On the question of her proposed changes in writing as a result of the group discussion in Term 1, Tess repeatedly confirmed that Tina's "making a jigsaw puzzle" metaphor had worked well in constructing her ideas for the contents at the pre-writing stage, effectively reducing the distraction due to worrying about applying standard writing conventions.

In week 6, Tess commented on revising drafts, and talked of cleaning the dust in a house where language-related errors were metaphorically described as "dust". It can be seen from the mapping that Tess perceived the revision process as an activity that primarily affected surface aspects of her texts: correcting grammar/vocabulary errors and proofreading. The foci appear not to include any global revising (e.g., changing the overall organisation and paragraph structure) or content revising (e.g., modifying single argument). The expected result of revising, in her metaphorical statement, is that there is no error in the texts.

7.6 Term 2: Tina's Elicited Metaphors

Tina's answers to the metaphor prompt in weeks 2 and 6 are set out in Table 7.6.

Table 7.6 Tina's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 2

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 2	**If an academic paper is like a speech. Writing is like giving a speech,** as they both express the speaker/writer's ideas and make their argument accepted by the audiences. To do this, one important step is to provide sufficient evidences by using sourced materials and more importantly showing how you make use of the materials to support your claim (Tina, orig. words)
Week 6	**Writing is like an emerging sculpture.** After the first draft, it is a decision time for removing the unnecessary pieces and adjusting the shape at a global level. The next step is to carve the details, such as the eyes and hair (such as the individual argument). The final step is the surface decoration, smoothing the surface and colouring, such as revising the language errors and proofreading (Tina, orig. words)

In week 2, Tina compared her writing to the process of making a speech. According to her account, connections between the target (writing) and the source (making a speech) are:

1. The expected objectives of writing and a speech are to (a) convey someone's viewpoints and (b) convince other people about the argument;

2. To achieve these objectives, it is important to provide sufficient properly referenced evidence;

3. Showing the speaker's (writer's) engagement with the evidence can give weight to the argument.

As she noted at her interview, the "speech" metaphor was related to

Lucy's "tour" metaphor in Term 1 (also see section 6.3). She pointed out that the "tour" metaphor allowed her to appreciate the importance of the reader's perspective in revising the argument and reinforced the idea that "writing is a silent talk, but does not lack emotion or argument" (Tina, my trans. at her interview). With reference to improving one's argument, she highlighted the use of well-sourced evidence and in-text referencing, showing a change in her concept of in-text citation, from her earlier focus on avoiding plagiarism, to strengthen the argument:

> The use of in-text referencing, for example, including the references in brackets, could lend weight to the argument, because the references can function as supporting evidence, showing that the points I am trying to make have been tested out by other people (Tina, my trans. at her interview).

In week 6, Tina described her writing as sculpture. Her statement suggested that an emerging sculpture was comparable to her writing in several ways:

1. Based on the first draft, the first step is a global revision such as removing the unnecessary pieces (cutting the irrelevant contents) and adjusting the shape (revising the whole structure);

2. Next, one starts local revising, focusing on the details of the sculpture (the writer's individual argument);

3. The final revision is surface decoration (surface-level issues in writing such as rhetorical refining and proofreading).

These three connections suggest that Tina perceived writing as a repetitive

process, consisting of three types of revision: organisational revision, content-related revision and surface-level revision. At her interview, Tina commented on her feelings about the first draft, "It looks like hacked pieces of stone and it is very hard to tell what it is going to be at that moment; however it is the foundation for the follow-up carving" (Tina, my trans. at her interview). Tina's reaction implies a degree of disappointment with the first draft, although she acknowledged the importance of a first draft.

7.7 Term 2: Wendy's Elicited Metaphors

Wendy's answers to the metaphor prompt at the first two workshops in Term 2 are summarised in Table 7.7 below.

Table 7.7 Wendy's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 2

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 2	**Writing in Term 1 is like editing a book.** I focused on what other people have said or have done under about a topic but did show my voice. **Writing the autumn term assignments is judging a live baking competition.** My job is to express my opinions (including my argument) about each contestant's work. I think these are what the audiences really want to get (Wendy, orig. words).
Week 6	**Writing is like playing with a jigsaw puzzle**. Each version of draft represents a small bit. My job is to integrate the different versions, making them fitted together (Wendy, orig. words).

In week 2, Wendy gave two metaphors of writing. Firstly, she perceived her writing in Term 1 as a process of editing a book, which concentrated on collecting and presenting other authors' opinions. However, what had been lost,

she felt, were her own opinions. According to her comments at the interview, there were at least two reasons that appeared to account for this. The first reason was a self-identified lack of relevant topic knowledge, with the result that she struggled to formulate her views. Her second problem was related to her unfamiliarity with analytical writing, so that "the whole texts were sometimes too narrative and it seemed difficult to identify my argument" (Wendy, my trans. at her interview). In her second metaphorical statement about writing her two autumn assignments, her original problem with "showing my voice" appeared to be resolved. She now made reference to "judging a live baking competition", which not only emphasised her awareness of the reader's perspective, but also showed her confidence in expressing her ideas, including her argument. It should be pointed out that Wendy also produced a new "robot" metaphor during her interview, when we discussed her responses, as an excerpt (from her interview) below illustrates:

> Wan: Could you explain, as a judge or writer, how would you effectively express your opinions?
>
> Wendy: The tone is very important. You need to act as a robot with no emotion-related bias. You cannot be aggressive or emotive, even though you really like or hate someone's work. If you think someone has done a great job, or in the context of writing, you strongly advocate someone's statements, you should provide evidence and show people how you draw the conclusion.
>
> Wan: Do you think you are a robot, when writing the two assignments?
>
> Wendy: Not really. I feel my language is a bit emotive. I should not attack a person to show my disagreement (my trans.)

It can be seen from Wendy's explanation that the language tone and one's engagement with the evidence have to be taken into consideration in order to express one's opinions efficiently. She recognised the flaws (i.e., the use of emotive language to attack a person) in her own reaction to someone's statement. Her understanding of the appropriate tone was highlighted by the "robot" metaphor.

In terms of her response to her proposed changes in writing after the group discussion in Term 1, Wendy again commented positively on Lucy's "tour" metaphor, which highlighted the reader's perspective; she considered it really helpful in spotting the absence of coherence in her writing. In addition, she also reported a change in relation to waiting for the Eureka moment highlighted by her "fashion show" metaphor in Term 1. As she put it at her interview, "it was unrealistic to start writing, until you have found sufficient evidence, especially when writing a timed assignment" (Wendy, my trans. at her interview).

In week 6, Wendy readopted Tina's "jigsaw puzzle" metaphor, which highlighted a different aspect of writing. It can be seen from her follow-up statement that what the metaphor accentuated is the multiple drafts at different stages of her writing, which metaphorically refers to the small pieces in a jigsaw, and the integration of the various drafts into a complete picture. At her interview, Wendy added an explanation for the set of drafts, specifying the various foci:

> The focus of revisions in the first draft is the overall structure, such as the links between paragraphs. In the subsequent draft, the main task is to check the argument, for example, by making changes to my analysis of the evidence and the individual arguments. In the final draft, the focus is placed on proofreading, resolving language-related problems

(Wendy, my trans. at her interview).

As with Tina (see section 7.6), Wendy's account of making multiple drafts again exhibited different levels of revision, from organisational revision to the surface-level revision, reinforcing the idea that writing is not a linear process.

7.8 Term 2: Zara's Elicited Metaphors

Zara's answers to the metaphor prompt at the first two workshops in Term 2 are summarised in Table 7.8.

Table 7.8 Zara's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 2

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 2	**Marking an argument is like arguing your favourite contestant in cooking competition.** You cannot get all the people like the person. But you could try to get them to agree with you on certain points by providing the evidence such as his/her innovative recipe and/or the delicate decoration of the dish. It is the same as making an argument in your writing. There is no right or wrong. (Zara, orig. words).
Week 6	**Writing is like the top glass bulb in an hourglass, making the material trickle down.** The material in big size cannot get through. Like writing a conclusion, to help readers reach to the key aspects of the writer's ideas easily, it requires the writer to summarise the information, including the author's points, argument and the focuses in order to help readers reach to the key aspects of the writer's ideas easily. It means the writer does not need to bring in a lot of detail of what he/she has said in the main part of writing (Zara, orig. words).

In week 2, Zara made reference to "arguing your favourite contestant in a cooking competition" to describe her understanding of writing arguments. Based on both her follow-up explanation and her comments at her interview, there were at least two reasons:

1. Acknowledging the fact that "you cannot get all the people [to] like the person", which suggested that opposing viewpoints are always likely to exist;

2. Providing the evidence in order to "get them to agree with you on certain points" suggested that the writer's argument could make his/her arguments convinced by providing relevant evidence.

At her interview, Zara reported that selecting the "competition" metaphor had to do with one of her autumn essays, which asked her to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of bilingual education and to state her position. A debate with her classmates who appeared to hold different views regarding bilingual education made Zara realise that:

Given the evidence from both sides, the question of whether bilingual education was good or bad was arguable; there seems no right or wrong, if I choose either position. The most important thing is I need to facilitate the supporting evidence to make my argument convincing (Zara, my trans. at her interview).

On the question of her proposed changes in her writing as a result of the group discussion in Term 1, Zara reacted positively to Lucy's "tour" metaphor, as it accentuated the need to think about the audience's perspective, which, she felt,

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worked reasonably well in structuring the contents:

> Perhaps the module tutor is the reader of my assignment. I need to keep her needs and perspective in mind when I write. The awareness certainly helped me clarify what 'they' want from me, decide what I should say regarding the topic and, at the revising stage, locate the places where I might not have said as much as I should have said (Zara, my trans. at her interview).

In week 6, Zara described her writing as the "top glass bulb in an hourglass" metaphor, showing her understanding of drawing a conclusion. It can be seen from her statement that a "top glass bulb" were comparable to writing a conclusion in a number of ways:

1. The glass bulb makes the materials trickle down (which in her writing, is related to summarising and pulling together the argument, the main points of view, and the foci of the writing);

2. "The material in big size cannot get through" the glass bulb, (which is metaphorically mapped onto avoiding a large chunk of text in a conclusion).

It does not seem difficult to make sense of a narrowing effect at the bottom of the top glass bulb (i.e., the neck of the hourglass). Therefore, it is fair to say Zara's metaphor reinforces the view that the conclusion needs to integrate the writer's key points; however, given the fact that all the sand in the glass bulb can pass through to the bottom, and is not reduced or condensed, the metaphor seems to go against Zara's argument about a conclusion needing to summarise the writer's key points; therefore, only part of the "top glass bulb in an hourglass"

image works.

It also should be noted that at her interview, Zara changed her "top glass bulb in an hourglass" metaphor to a "mining gold" metaphor to revise her understanding of making a conclusion. The "mining gold" metaphor, she felt, was more appropriate, when emphasising the salient features of a conclusion:

> It is the last chance to persuade readers to accept the author's points of view and to impress yourself upon them as a writer, by means of reiterating the most important points (i.e., your overall argument). In other words, you need to make your readers know the gold (Zara, my trans. at her interview).

7.9 Term 2: Group Discussion about Personal Metaphors

At the third workshop in week 10, participants were asked to share and discuss the metaphors of writing they had created or employed in Term 2. Based on the observation of the second group discussion and their comments at the follow-up interviews, the results showed that participants felt the metaphor-based group discussion had at least three positive effects on their writing (see Table 7.9).

Table 7.9 Topics in Participants' Reactions to the Group Discussion of Metaphors in Term 2

Reactions to group discussion / Participants	Identifying writing problems/difficulty	Generating new views of aspects of writing	Planning the action to make changes in writing
Joyce	✓		✓
Lucy			✓
Sam	✓	✓	✓
Tess	✓	✓	✓
Tina			✓
Wendy		✓	
Zara	✓		✓

Note: '✓' flags the topics about which participants made positive comments at their individual follow-up interviews after the group discussion of personal metaphors of writing.

The first effect involved the identification of personal writing problems. Four participants (Joyce, Sam, Zara and Tess) reported that the group discussion of individuals' metaphors of writing helped them identify flaws in their own writing. Firstly, Lucy's "making a documentary film" metaphor made three participants (Joyce, Sam and Tess) feel that they did not identify the research gaps/problems when writing literature review. As Sam put it:

Comparing my literature review with the "documentary" metaphor, what is missing in my work is to identify the areas such as establishing what has not yet been looked at closely, and what needs further study to resolve the existing problems. After the group discussion, I think highlighting gaps and problems is very important. To frame a purpose statement, I need to identify a problem related to the gap, explaining why other people should care about my writing (Sam, field notes, my trans.).

Secondly, Joyce reacted positively to Lucy's "designing a temple" metaphor, as she considered the metaphor described explicitly the function of key aspects of an argument. She came to realise that her previous understanding of a writer's overall argument was problematic:

> I have a vague sense of the overall argument. Lucy's "temple" metaphor allows me to understand that the writer's point is different from the overall argument; the latter is like the roof, which is supported by a number of pillars, comprising the writer's individual points (Joyce, my trans. at her interview).

In addition, what Joyce learnt from the group discussion was the use of evidence, by showing the writer's critical engagement with the evidence that she thought was neglected in her own writing:

> An important implication from Tina's and Sam's and Wendy's metaphors, is that making an efficient argument is to present explicitly the links between the points that you are trying to make and the supporting evidence that is actually used (Joyce, my trans. at her interview).

Finally, based on Wendy's and Tina's comments on her "top glass bulb in an hourglass" metaphor and "mining gold" metaphor, Zara recognised the flaws in her understanding of drawing conclusions:

> They both felt it was hard to relate my two metaphors to the two aspects of writing a conclusion: a discussion of limitations of the work and

implications for future research. Neither of these two is covered in my writing (Zara, my trans. at her interview).

The second effect of the group discussion had to do with new views of writing, as reported by Tess, Wendy and Sam. Firstly, both Wendy and Lucy felt that Tina's statement that "writing is like giving a speech" brought a new interpretation of the use of in-text referencing, beyond their previous understanding of in-text citation simply as a way of avoiding plagiarism. They both now realised that the in-text referencing could actually serve as strong evidence to improve the reliability of the writer's argument, because "my points have been supported by other people in different studies" (Lucy, my trans. at her interview).

For Sam and Tess, the idea of multiple drafts at the revision stage, highlighted by Tina's "an emerging sculpture" metaphor and Wendy's "playing with a jigsaw puzzle" metaphor was rather unexpected. At their follow-up interviews, both of them felt disappointed with their own first drafts and felt anxious with regard to revising them:

I was a little worried, if there are quite a lot places that need to be revised. What I expect to do for revision is to refine the language and reconstruct the meaning (Sam, my trans. at her interview).

Both Sam and Tess felt considerable relief, because their views of their own first drafts were quite similar to the reactions reported by other people in the group. Based on their responses to the "sculpture" metaphor, they made sense of the

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concept that "writing is a process, involving multiple revision steps" (Tess, my trans. at her interview).

The third aspect of the usefulness of the group discussion, reported by six of the participants (although not Wendy) related their willingness to plan actions to make changes in their future writing practices. Lucy commented that the logical links between the writer's individual arguments, based on Tess's "making a necklace" metaphor, could help her tighten up the structure in her writing.

Tina was a strong adherent of Wendy's "judging a live baking competition" metaphor regarding an impersonal style of language:

> Wendy's metaphor made me think, it is very important to have an awareness of being critical. The choice of language style matters a great deal to construct an efficient argument, because it is likely to affect readers' understanding of the texts. As Wendy said, an impersonal style of language should be employed in writing (Tina, my trans. at her interview).

Sam and Tess claimed to have realised from Tina's "sculpture" metaphor and Wendy's "jigsaw" metaphor with respect to the importance of multiple drafts at the revision stage:

> An important lesson is that there is no need to worry about how awful the first draft is. Tina's three-stage schedule that involves structure revision, content revision and language refining sounds reasonable and I am about to employ it in my own writing (Sam, my trans. at her interview).

For Tess, Sam and Joyce, Lucy's "make a documentary film" metaphor

made them recognise the importance of highlighting gaps or problems in previous research which, up to till then, had been neglected in their writing. Therefore, they hoped to improve these areas in their next assignments.

Finally, based on Wendy's and Tina's comments on her two metaphors "writing is like top glass bulb in an hourglass" and "mining gold", Zara indicated that she would add a discussion of the implications for future research and a discussion of the limitations of the current work in her next assignment.

In short, the metaphor-based group discussion in Terms 2 was generally successful, as everyone seemed to draw something useful from it, as a result of sharing and commenting on other people's metaphors of writing.

7.10 Term 2: Summary

To sum up the results in Term 2, the seven participants demonstrated various aspects of their own writing via metaphors and explained whether and how they had implemented the 'changes' to their writing, which had been proposed in Term 1. A general impression of their writing in Term 2 is that the most frequently mentioned aspects of writing were: the reader's perspective, the construction of coherence in writing and the writer's arguments. Compared with what was highlighted in Term 1, the level of participants' stress about writing appeared to have reduced. No anxiety-related issues were raised in Term 2.

With reference to sharing and discussing their individual metaphors, all participants reported that the activity was helpful in identifying writing problems/difficulties, in generating new views of aspects of writing, and in planning to make changes to their writing.

The results also suggested other sources for participants' metaphors, apart from those created by the participants themselves. This included using metaphors

generated by other people in the group (Joyce and Wendy), borrowing metaphors from textbooks (Lucy) and adopting their ESL tutors' metaphors (Joyce).

Similar to in Term 1, participants did not always provide metaphors with appropriate metaphorical correspondences between the source and their own writing (i.e., Zara's "top glass bulb in an hourglass" metaphor). Methodologically, the individual follow-up interviews were again found useful in clarifying participants' intended meaning of their metaphors.

Notes to Chapter Seven

[1] The assessment for Term 1 consists of two assignments of 4000 to 5000 words related to a topic, one from a compulsory module and the other from an option module.

Chapter 8   Main Study: Conceptualisations of Academic Writing in Term 3

8.1 Preamble

This chapter presents the findings of seven students' metaphorical conceptualisations of their academic writing in Term 3 (from section 8.2 to section 8.8) and reports on their reactions to the third group discussion about individuals' personal metaphors (section 8.9) followed by their overall evaluation of metaphor-based activities over the three terms (8.10). Section 8.11 summarises and revisits some key findings.

Similar to Terms 1 and 2, three writing workshops were arranged in Term 3. The aim of the first workshop in week 2 was, as before, to collect participants' metaphors of writing. Follow-up individual interviews were arranged, allowing participants to offer an explanation for selecting specific metaphors, which, in turn, could help me clarify their intended meanings. As students had submitted their two spring term assignments in week 1 of Term 3, it was decided to ask them at the first workshop to provide metaphors in relation to writing their two spring term assignments. Participants were also asked to comment on whether and how far they had implemented the proposed changes in their writing after the second group discussion of personal metaphors in Term 2. At the second workshop in week 6, participants were asked to share and discuss metaphors they had created in week 2 and attend follow-up interviews. The purpose of the interview was to examine the effects of metaphor-based group discussion on individuals' conceptualisations of writing. In week 8, participants were asked to submit a written statement (either in Chinese or English), with an overall evaluation of how far metaphorical conceptualisations of writing and the three group discussions across the three academic terms had helped them develop their writing. The data

collection is summarised in Table 8.1.

This section will first examine individuals' elicited metaphors of writing in week 2 and then discuss the results of the group discussion regarding personal metaphor of writing in week 6. This will be followed by participants' written evaluation of the metaphor-based activities across the three terms. As with previous summary tables of participants' metaphors in Chapters 6 and 7, the data collected from their written statements are the participants' original words and bold type highlights the metaphor selected. The interview extracts are my translations of their responses in Chinese.

Table 8.1 Data Collection in Term 3

Term 3	Contents	Method(s)
Week 2	Workshop 7: Collected participants' metaphors	Collection of written statements Interviews
Week 6	Workshop 8: Group discussion of personal metaphors	Classroom observations Interviews
Week 8	Workshop 9: Collected participants' evaluations of the metaphor-based activities across the three terms	Collection of written statements

8.2 Term 3: Joyce's Elicited Metaphors

In week 2, Joyce compared her writing to "a poster presentation", drawing attention to the interaction between the readers and the writer (see Table 8.2 below).

Table 8.2 Joyce's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 3

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 2	**Writing is like giving a poster presentation. People are reading your poster.** You are standing next to the poster, explaining what the people may get confused, rather than spending much time on the contents they can understand without your explaining. It is the same as in writing. If the readers have the background knowledge, you do not need to give a definition (Joyce, orig. words).

It can be seen from her statement that, the metaphor accentuates people's potential confusion about the poster, which is metaphorically mapped onto an awareness of readers' needs. Her response also shows that the reader's perspective could be useful in deciding if the contents are necessary and need to be included in writing. This was later confirmed at her interview, where Joyce commented on the advantage of adopting an awareness of the readers' comprehension, concerning drafting the literature review in one of her assignments:

Writing the assignment for my tutor is completely different from writing for people who have no background knowledge of classroom interaction. As my tutor is fully aware of the target topic, there is no need to include a large amount of text to explain and define the subject and give its history which is not what my tutor expects me to do in the assignment (Joyce, my trans. at her interview).

Turning to her responses to the proposed changes in her writing after the second metaphor-based group discussion in Term 2, Joyce repeatedly reacted positively to Lucy's "documentary" metaphor, as she felt the metaphor reminded her to highlight the research problems/gaps in the literature review. With

reference to constructing an argument highlighted by Tina's, Sam's and Wendy's metaphors in Term 2, Joyce reported that she had devoted time and effort to focusing on the writer's engagement with the material in her two spring term assignments, by means of strengthening the connections between her assertions and the evidence.

8.3 Term 3: Lucy's Elicited Metaphors

In week 2, Lucy adopted "writing is like flower arrangement", depicting multiple stages in her writing (see Table 8.3 below).

Table 8.3 Lucy's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 3

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 2	**Writing is like flower arrangement.** You have to make sure you get all right flowers to fit the theme requirement such as the Mother's Day. Then you need to assemble the flowers, making sure they could match in the arrangement. The rudiment of the bouquet at this stage may still far from a perfect target and needs adjustments. You then need to cut the unwanted flowers and branches and then adjust the bouquet until you achieve an ideal shape. Finally, it's time to decorate it, making the bouquet have a nice look, like smoothing the texts in writing (Lucy, orig. words).

Based on her metaphorical statement, the following aspects of "flower arrangement" could be related to her writing:

1. The first step is to prepare the flowers to meet thematic requirements, such as Mother's Day (search for relevant materials from readings);

2. Next, it is time to assemble the flowers (organise written ideas, including sequencing sets of points of argument in a logical order);

3. The rudiments of the bouquet need further adjustments to meet the target image (the demand of additional revisions of the first draft);

4. The first revision step is to adjust the flowers and branches (revise the contents);

 5. The next step is to shape the bouquet (make changes in structure and/or organisation);

6. The final step is to decorate the bouquet (proofread the text).

However, at the follow-up interview, Lucy thought my initial interpretation in step 2 "assemble the flowers" as organising written ideas was too broad and she then added a statement "It refers to sequencing sets of argument points".

It can be seen from the mappings that, the aspects of the writing process that the "flower arrangement" metaphor stresses are collecting relevant materials from reading, the logical arrangement of written ideas and multiple steps in revising the first draft. According to Lucy's accounts of the metaphor at her interview, the three aspects above were prerequisites for writing a good academic paper. The first dimension was related to the literature review, which, she felt, required writers to be selective about what they read, "looking for specific information relating to an assignment topic and coping with the lengthy reading lists within a limited time" (Lucy, my trans. at her interview). The second aspect, she thought, was the logical connections among the individual arguments, for the purpose of allowing the readers to easily understand the writer's key points. She also pointed out that Tess's "making a necklace" metaphor in Term 2 had led her to pay attention to the establishment of logical links between individual arguments in her spring Term assignments. Additionally, Lucy was a particularly strong

adherent to Tess's view of revisions highlighted by the "emerging sculpture" metaphor, namely, that revision is a repetitive process and took considerable time and energy. In her response to the first draft, she emphasised that "it does not matter at this stage, if the language is incorrect, provided that the main points and ideas have been captured" (Lucy, my trans. at her interview).

8.4 Term 3: Sam's Elicited Metaphors

In week 2, Sam drew attention to generating written thoughts from books depicted by the image of "spinning a web of meaning with words and images pulled from reading" (see Table 8.4). The reason for selecting this metaphor had, as Sam put it in her statement, to do with her difficulty in deciding "what to write regarding the target topic". She thought the problem was attributable to her lack of background knowledge on the subject.

Table 8.4 Sam's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 3

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 2	**Writing is like spinning a web of meaning with words and images pulled from reading,** as I am not quite sure what to write about the target topic due to limited prior knowledge in this area. So, I have to develop thoughts from reading. Then, I will transfer them to my written ideas (Sam, orig. words).

Her statement also reveals that, on the subject of resolving the problem of developing written ideas, reading seems to be an efficient way to absorb relevant information. This was later confirmed at her interview, when Sam commented on topic-related reading, which she found to be of great benefit in stimulating her thinking and offering a good preparation for formulating her written thoughts; however, she recognised that the process of generating ideas was time-consuming

and she expressed the difficulty in finishing a writing assignment within the stipulated timeframe.

In her responses to her proposed changes in writing as a result of the group discussion in Term 2, Sam commented positively on Tina's "making a documentary film" metaphor, in that it made her pay attention to the research gaps and problems in her two spring assignments, when she drafted the literature review. The second benefit she reported concerned time management. She considered that Tina's "sculpture" metaphor, with an emphasis on multiple stages in the revisions, had helped her plan her own revisions efficiently: "Tina's metaphor not only presents various levels of revision, but also suggests a sensible sequence of revising different aspects of writing" (Sam, my trans. at her interview).

8.5 Term 3: Tess's Elicited Metaphors

Table 8.5 Tess's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 3

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 2	As Tina put it in Term 2, **the process of revisions is like emerging sculpture, consisting of shaping the sculpture, carving the details, and polishing the surface.** Placing a focus at each stage such as structural change, adjustments to the contents and smoothing the texts makes the revision more organised compared to it in Term 2 (Tess, orig. words).

In week 2, like Sam, Tess adopted Tina's "emerging sculpture" metaphor created in Term 2 and said the metaphor offered her a guide when revising her writing. The metaphorical correspondences between the source and the target are summarised below, based on mutual agreement at her interview:

1. Shaping the sculpture refers to the changes at a structural level.

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2. Carving the details represents the adjustments to the contents,
    (including the analysis of the material and the construction of
    arguments);

3. Polishing the surface is connected with surface-level revisions,
    (particularly the corrections of language-related errors and language
    refinement).

At her interview, Tess recognised her unrealistic expectations about early drafts, particularly in Term 1, and commented that "it is almost impossible to make the structure and the contents perfect" (Tess, my trans.). She pointed out that her previous perfectionism about the first drafts had seriously affected the flow of her writing:

> My previous obsession with grammar corrections made me pay a lot of attention to language errors. In addition, if I feel the analysis about someone's findings or claims is insufficient, I often stop to think about how I could develop the analysis further. After that, I forget what is supposed to come next (Tess, my trans. at her interview).

In Term 2, Tess gave up her thoughts about revising as an activity that affected primarily surface aspects of her texts in Term 1, "cleaning the dust after reconstruction of a house" (Tess, orig. words in Term 1). The three-step revision process, depicted by Tina's "sculpture" metaphor enabled her to establish a more efficient plan for revising her writing.

Turning to her proposed changes in writing after the second metaphor-based group discussion in Term 2, besides the adjustment to the revisions of drafts, Tess reacted positively to Lucy's "documentary" metaphor and said the metaphor

had reminded her to identify gaps and/or problems when writing literature review in her spring term assignments.

8.6 Term 3: Tina's Elicited Metaphors

In week 2, Tina made reference to the image of "attending a party after a research conference", which, she felt was similar to drafting the literature review in her assignments (see Table 8.6 below).

Table 8.6 Tina's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 3

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 2	**Writing literature review is like attending a party after a research conference.** You are invited to make a speech. Also, you have the chance to talk to other scholars in the field, discussing and evaluating the current/previous research. What you also can learn from the conversations is some areas that the areas that are under developed or need to be further developed (Tina, orig. words).

Looking at her statement, writing literature can be compared to attending a party in a number of ways:

1. The participant (writer) is required to make a speech (showing the writer's viewpoints in writing);

2. The participant talks to other scholars (i.e., considering other studies in the research area and providing evaluative stances);

3. The participant can gain new knowledge from conversations about areas, which are problematic or under-developed (i.e., gaining an awareness of research gaps/problems).

It can be seen from these mappings that the aspects of writing a literature

review, which were highlighted by the metaphor are the writer's own opinions, considerations and evaluations of other studies, as well as a procedure for identifying research gaps and problems. At a general level, Tina's metaphor seems to create a powerful image of the writer, maximising the writer's agency. First of all, the writer needs to express his/her opinions clearly and confidently (as when making a public speech); secondly, the writer is not a story teller "just reporting what has happened during conversations with other scholars and what other people have said" (Tina, my trans. at her interview). Rather, the writer is required to provide evaluations. Additionally, the writer has to be aware of any research problems or gaps.

With respect to her responses to the proposed adjustments to her writing, Tina said she had focused on using an impersonal style of language in her assignments, as a result of Wendy's "robot" metaphor created in Term 2.

8.7 Term 3: Wendy's Elicited Metaphors

In week 2, Wendy continued to discuss her thoughts about making an argument (as did in Term 2) by adopting the image of "a lawyer making a case at trial that someone is not guilty" (see Table 8.7).

Her statement shows that, the "trial" metaphor highlights the value of an organised presentation of the case (a well-structured argument), and showing the jury (readers) convincing evidence that someone is not guilty (convincing readers about the writer's arguments, based on the evidence presented).

Table 8.7 Wendy's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 3

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 2	**Making an argument in writing is like a lawyer making a case at trial that someone is not guilty.** Your readers are the jury who will decide if the person is guilty. Winning the trial required the lawyer to make an organised presentation and show sufficient evidence to the jury (Wendy, orig. words).

At her interview, Wendy added the following comments on the need for an awareness of the reader's perspective:

In the court, the jury may not just take what the lawyer (i.e., the writer) says about his/her client not being guilty. This means stating your opinion confidently is not enough to win the case. At the same time, the lawyer will be asked to present sufficient relevant evidence (Wendy, my trans. at her interview).

She admitted that her previous "judging a live baking competition" metaphor, with its single focus on the expression of the writer's opinions, did not adequately represent her current understanding of constructing an argument.

She also expressed her disagreement with Sam's argument-related metaphor, "writing an argument is like joining in a debate" in Term 2. From her perspective, the aim of constructing an argument is not a battle between two disagreeing sides; instead, it is more like an arranged and supported presentation of a viewpoint at a research seminar, where both sides desired a better understanding of the subject matter under discussion. In this scenario, the

acknowledgment of the various opinions towards the subject matter became rather important. For this reason, Zara's "writing is like arguing for your favourite contestant in cooking competition" created in Term 2 was, she thought, more sensible, because it both addressed the fact that the writer's assertions could be arguable, and recognised that the writer could often convince everyone or bring them to accept the writer's perspective. It showed an acknowledgement of the fact that "opposing viewpoints were always existing" (Wendy, orig. words, at her interviews). She reported that this new awareness had helped her pay attention to the language tone, "using language that does not commit me firmly to a particular point of view and persuades readers rather than informs them" (Wendy, my trans. at her interview).

8.8 Term 3: Zara's Elicited Metaphors

In week 2, Zara's metaphorical statement focused on drafting conclusions in her spring term assignments, which was likened to an election campaign speech (see Table 8.8 below).

Table 8.8 Zara's Elicited Metaphors of Writing in Term 3

Time	Metaphors of writing and metaphorical entailments
Week 2	**Writing conclusions is like an election campaign speech.** To win the audiences, the speaker has to know what his audience are expected to hear. This requires the speaker to clarify his key claims, point out the problems of the current policy to be resolved and propose his innovation plan. It is the same in constructing a conclusion. To make a good conclusion, you want your audiences to clarify what you have stated in the assignment, have an awareness of the problems and limitations in the current research and gain knowledge from your writing (Zara, orig. words).

Looking at her statement on making an impressive speech, there are at least four requirements that she thought corresponded to creating a good conclusion:

1. The speaker (the writer) needs to analyse and understand the audience's expectations;

2. The speaker (the writer) needs to restate his/her assertions (reiterating the main points that have been made in the assignment);

3. The speaker has to show a clear awareness of the limitations of the current 'policy' (identifying the problems/limitations in the present work);

4. The speaker needs to present an innovative solution (i.e. suggesting solutions to be explored in future research).

Compared with Zara's "top glass bulb in an hourglass" and "mining gold" metaphors, where the emphasis was on pulling together all the writer's main points in the conclusion, the "election campaign speech" metaphor foregrounds the aspects that an effective conclusion should include. Besides reinforcing the main ideas that the writer wishes readers to retain and the need to consider readers' understanding, the "election campaign speech" metaphor highlights the importance of a discussion of the limitations of the current work and implications for future research; clearly, these two aspects of a conclusion were overlooked in Zara's Term 2 writing.

8.9 Term 3: Group Discussion about Personal Metaphors

At the second writing workshop in week 6, participants were asked to share and discuss the metaphors of writing they had created in week 2. At their follow-up interviews, participants were consistently positive about the value of this group

discussion session. Their reactions are summarised in Table 8.9 below.

Table 8.9 Topics in Participants' Reactions to the Group Discussion of Metaphors in Term 3

Topics \ Participants	Joyce	Lucy	Tess	Tina	Sam	Wendy	Zara
Generating new views of aspects of writing	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Planning the action to make changes in writing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: '✓' highlights the topics about which participants made positive comments at their individual follow-up interviews about the group discussion of personal metaphors of writing.

The first benefit had to do with generating new views on aspects of writing. Five participants (Joyce, Tess, Sam, Lucy and Zara) reported that Wendy's "making an argument in writing is like a lawyer making a case at trial that someone is not guilty" helped them establish an appropriate tone in their own writing. As Lucy put it:

I agree with Wendy's claim that the point of constructing an argument is not a battle between two disagreeing sides, where one side must win. Rather, the focus should be placed on how to make people to believe that my assertions are sensible, based on the evidence provided. The existence of opposing viewpoints makes me realise that I am trying to persuade people who hold different views rather than to educate them. I do not claim to have the final word on the subject (Lucy, field notes, my trans.).

Zara, who had acknowledged the value of opposing viewpoints in her "Writing is like arguing for your favourite contestant in cooking competition" created in Term 2, felt that Wendy's "trial" metaphor was better at foregrounding the value of hedging, as it functioned in academic writing, something about which she had previously been confused:

> Wendy's metaphor makes me think that the readers I am trying to persuade to accept my claims in my assignments (i.e., my tutors) were experts in the subject matter, like the jury in the court. The purpose of my writing is not to make them think their opinions are wrong, but to present the true state of my understanding. To do this, I should avoid strong statements. I think that is how hedging works in texts (Zara, my trans. at her interview).

The second aspect of the usefulness of the group discussion reported by all the participants were related to their willingness to plan future of actions to make changes in their future writing procedures. Six participants (Zara, Lucy, Tina, Sam Tess and Wendy) pointed out that the reader's perspective highlighted by Joyce's "poster presentation" metaphor could be useful in helping them select their written ideas:

> I quite like Joyce's metaphor, comparing writing to a poster presentation. As a reader, I would like to know more about the facts which are novel, problematic and obscure in the current literature; there is no need to repeat the points everybody has already been aware of. The reader's perspective

can be useful in deciding unnecessary content at both the drafting and the revision stage (Tina, field notes. my trans) .

Turning to their reactions to Wendy's "trial" metaphor, five participants reported that the metaphor allowed them to clarify the appropriate language style for academic writing, which they felt, had been either overlooked in their previous writing (Joyce, Tess, Sam and Zara) or vaguely understood (Lucy and Tina). They all intended to make the relevant changes in their MA dissertations.

8.10 Evaluations of the Metaphorical Conceptualisations of Writing

At the third workshop in week 8, each participant was asked to provide a written statement (either in Chinese or English) for an overall evaluation of the usefulness of conceptualising writing through metaphor over the three terms (see section 8.10.1) including the three group discussions (see section 8.10.2). The purpose was to investigate how far the metaphor-based activities had helped them develop their own writing. Three people (Sam, Tess and Wendy) provided statements in Chinese, while the other four (Tina, Joyce, Zara and Lucy) wrote their responses in English. I translated the three Chinese texts into English and emailed the result to the three participants individually, in order to correct any substantive misinterpretation. No examples of problematic or mistranslation was found. All statements were analysed by open coding in order to look for emerging themes. To identify any patterns across participants' responses, the analysis included a focus on the frequency of the themes that participants mentioned at their interviews.

8.10.1 Evaluations of Metaphorical Conceptualisations of Writing

Overall, participants found that metaphorical conceptualisation of their writing had been useful for at least three reasons (see Figure 8.1 below).

Figure 8.1 A Summary of responses concerning the creation of metaphors

Facilitated personal reflection on writing experiences—7 mentions

Identified personal difficulties/problems of writing—5 mentions

Raised an awareness of finding ways to resolve problems—1 mention

Firstly, all participants stated that the action of thinking of a metaphor to conceptualise their writing facilitated self-reflection on their experiences of writing. This included reflections on personal conceptions of writing, previous writing experiences before the MA programme, and actual writing activities (e.g., four Term assignments and ELS essays) during the MA programme. To borrow Sam's words:

> Creating a metaphor of writing required me to connect aspects of writing such as 'revision' or 'outline' to a concrete image. It means you have to recall what had happened in the writing process and think about the characteristics of the different stages of writing. To think of an image, I have to decide what I want to express through the metaphor in terms of my writing. These metaphors can be my conceptions of writing or my writing problems/difficulties (Sam, my trans. from her statement).

The second effect was reported by five participants (Sam, Zara, Wendy, Tina and Lucy) who said that metaphor creation allowed them to identify their

own writing problems/difficulties. For instance, Wendy reiterated her problem of planning time for writing in her "designing a fashion show" metaphor in Term 1:

> I came to realise that waiting for the "aha moment" to get writing started actually seriously delayed the entire writing process. I did not have much time left to revise the drafts. The deadline did not allow me to start writing until I collected enough evidence (Wendy, my trans. from her statement).

Thirdly, Wendy was the only one who addressed the question of finding ways to resolve the writing problem when she created a metaphor. In her response to her tutor's comments on her mid-term assignment in Term 1, "my tutor considered that I added too many unnecessary ingredients that badly affected the flavour", Wendy seemed to acknowledge the cause of the problem, namely, mixing unnecessary ingredients (i.e., irrelevant writing ideas) and indicated that she would make a great effort to refine her written ideas at the outline stage.

8.10.2 Evaluations of the Metaphor-based Group Discussion

Six key themes were identified in the students' responses to sharing and discussing personal metaphors of writing (see Figure 8.2).

Figure 8.2 A Summary of Responses Concerning Metaphor-based Group Discussions

> Facilitated the group discussion of writing —7 mentions
>
> Clarified concepts of aspects of writing—7 mentions
>
> Gained writing confidence—7 mentions
>
> Identified personal writing problems—7 mentions
>
> Enhanced critical thinking about different views of writing—5 mentions
>
> Implemented plans of action to make adjustments to writing —7 mentions

Looking at Figure 8.2, it can be concluded that the metaphor-based group discussion was largely successful.

All participants reported that sharing writing experiences via metaphors facilitated the group discussion:

I can visualise the intangible writing process [by] means of concrete images. ….I also know what happened in other people's writing [processes]. Some metaphors such as Zara's "top glass bulb in an hourglass" are really interesting; so I really want to know why she chose the metaphorical image and then ask her to give an explanation, if I feel anything confused (Joyce, orig. words from her statements).

All participants also pointed out that their classmates' metaphors helped them clarify their concepts of various aspects of writing. This included capturing the ideas participants could identify with, and generating new views of aspects of writing. For instance, Tess commented on her "sculpture" metaphor in Term 3 that was built on Tina's "writing is like emerging sculpture" metaphor created in Term 2: "Tina's metaphor exhibits the process of revisions in a way that I actually perceive and accept" (Tess, my trans. from her statement).

With reference to generating new views of aspects of writing, Lucy was a strong adherent of Wendy's statement that "making an argument in writing is like a lawyer making a case at trial that someone is not guilty", which, she felt, helped her resolve her confusion with academic tone. As she put it in her written evaluation:

> The metaphor offered a very good explanation for the language tone in academic writing, suggesting the ways that the writer could adopt to make [adjustments] to the language (Lucy, orig. words).

The next general acknowledgement from all participants was that the group discussion about personal metaphors had helped them identify their own writing problems. As Sam wrote in her statement:

> I quite like Zara's "Writing is like what doctor wrote in the prescription" in Term 1, which made me realise that I had the same problem with refining my expressions and searching for vocabulary during composing, which was a major reason for writer's block (Sam, my trans. from her statement).

In her statement, Zara said she really appreciated Wendy's and Tina's comments in Term 2, on her two conclusion-related metaphors, "writing is like top glass bulb in an hourglass" and "writing is like mining gold"; their comments made her start to recognise that her understanding of the functions of writing a conclusion was problematic, due to not considering the limitations of the work, or the implications for future research.

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The participants' statements also showed they had made adjustments to their writing, after sharing other people's metaphors. This included implementing new views of writing, and resolving personal problems. For instance, Zara reported that she included a summary of problems with and limitations of her study and suggestions for future research, when writing conclusions in her Term 2 assignments; she claimed it was due to Wendy's and Tina's queries about her metaphors of constructing conclusions at the group discussion in Term 2. In her statement, Tina summarised the changes in her actual writing practices, one of which was related to the strategy of refining material by having an awareness of the reader's needs. This was considered as an important implication from Joyce's "giving a poster presentation" metaphor created in Term 3.

Ultimately, all participants felt that they had gained confidence in writing by sharing metaphors with their classmates in the group. As Tina put it,

> I always felt very relaxed after sharing other people's metaphors. I come to see that we had similar problems; it is really nice to know how other people react and deal with these problems. I confidently think my writing problems can be resolved. It is a learning process. This is nothing to fear (Tina, orig. words from her statements).

Lastly, five participants (Tina, Wendy, Zara, Lucy and Tess) stated that discussing various metaphors of writing had also enhanced their critical thinking ability. As Wendy put it:

> I seem to be getting used to a pattern of thinking, which is helpful for practising critical thinking. When someone is talking about her

metaphors of writing, the first thing I want to know is what the person wants to do with the metaphor; which aspects of writing she is highlighting. Then I think about whether her concepts and/or understanding of writing are sensible. Next, I check my writing and see if her metaphor can apply to my writing (Wendy, my trans. from her statements).

8.11 Term 3: Summary

Similar to Terms 1 and 2, participants in Term 3 were able to describe various aspects of their writing through metaphors. The overall impression of participants' responses in Term 3 is that the most frequently mentioned aspect of writing was writing a literature review. This is either related to showing individuals' personal understanding of the function of a literature review (Tina and Joyce), or to confirming participants' actions, namely, identifying the research problems/gaps in the relevant literature, and in their actual writing practices (Sam and Tess).

An examination of participants' overall written evaluations of the whole set of metaphor-related activities reveals that both the conceptualisations of writing through metaphors and group-discussion about individuals' personal metaphors were beneficial activities. With reference to the creation of metaphors in terms of their writing, participants reported that the activity was useful in facilitating reflection on their writing processes, identifying individuals' personal writing problems and raising an awareness of finding solutions. In addition, participants also stated that the three group discussions of individuals' personal metaphors of writing were helpful in facilitating the group discussion of personal writing, clarifying personal concepts of aspects of writing, increasing their writing confidence, identifying personal writing problems, facilitating critical thinking

about different views of writing and formulating plans for making changes to their

writing.

Chapter 9   Main Study: Overall Conceptualisations of Academic Writing

9.1 Preamble

This chapter has two foci. Firstly, it synthesises the findings about participants' elicited metaphors of writing over the three academic terms in order to generalise individuals' conceptualisations of writing, including their modified concepts about understanding of and feelings towards academic writing practices as well as the implementation of proposed adjustments to their conceptualisations of their writing practice (section 9.2). Section 9.3 revisits some key findings and concludes with a discussion of pedagogical and research implications.

9.2.1 Changes in Joyce's Conceptualisations of Writing

Joyce's conceptualisations of writing changed markedly over the three terms. At the beginning of Term 1, she appeared to be vocal about her concerns in relation to academic writing, indicating a lack of writing confidence. After the first group discussion at the end of Term 1, her responses seemed to suggest a shift in focus to the impact of the metaphor-based group discussion and related adjustments to her writing. This included clarifying her writing problems (concerning over-anxiety about the grade, searching vocabulary during composing), updating her understanding of writing (i.e., having an overall argument and an appropriate language tone) and recognising the overlooked aspects of writing (i.e., the reader's perspective, links between the writer's claims and the evidence and gaps/problems in the literature review). Additionally, she also reported her awareness of her problem with coherence in writing.

More specifically, looking at her responses in Term 1, Joyce did not feel empowered or confident in her ability as an academic writer. Her primary concern

seemed to result from her view of writing as an assessment, whereby the sole object for a writer was to achieve a passing grade, and a lack of knowledge of academic writing conventions that would take considerable time and effort to learn.

After the first metaphor-based group discussion, Joyce came to see that several aspects of her writing had gone wrong and/or needed attention to be paid to them. Firstly, she reported that her previous view of writing as an assessment-based activity and her anxiety about grades seemed to introduce an emotional barrier to her writing, leading to increased frustration, which actually decreased her productivity. Secondly, by sharing Zara's "prescription" metaphor, she recognised that over-emphasis on refining language, especially at the composing stage, caused serious distraction. Thirdly, she had become aware of the importance of considering one's audience in written communication, reflected in Lucy's "tour" metaphor, which she had ignored in her previous writing. In a supervision meeting with her ELS tutor at the end of Term 1, Joyce considered that her tutor's metaphorical statement "the wire of the necklace had broken off and thus I cannot restring the beads" (Joyce, my trans. at her interview) made her realise that the logical links among the sets of her points were not evident, or were absent and that she should pay particular attention to them.

In term 2, no negative emotion-related response emerged, which can be seen as indicative of an increased confidence in her writing. Joyce constructed her metaphorical statements around "making a necklace", reflecting her new understanding of strengthening writing coherence. She noted that she had abandoned her previous over exploration of vocabulary/expressions to meet the writing conventions at the composing stage and was now concentrating on generating her written ideas. She confirmed that she was thinking about the

reader's perspective, as she had promised to do in Term 1; this helped her edit her arguments and, particularly when identifying the flaws and gaps in them.

After the second group discussion in Term 2, Joyce explained the ways that she made adjustments to her writing. Firstly, she updated her understanding of the literature review, based on Lucy's "documentary" metaphor and recognised that the writer should flag the research problem/gaps when he/she reviewed the relevant literature. Secondly, Lucy's "temple" metaphor enabled her to distinguish the writer's overall argument from the writer's individual line of argument, which had previously confused her. Thirdly, she said she was aware of constructing efficient arguments by means of strengthening the links between the writer's claims and the supporting evidence.

In Term 3, Joyce's "poster presentation" metaphor again reinforced her view of writing as a kind of writer-reader communication and demonstrated the usefulness of considering the reader's comprehension, particularly when drafting the literature review. Joyce confirmed she had implemented her new view of writing literature reviews in her two spring-term assignments, as she had promised she would do at the end of Term 2, by flagging the research problems with/gaps in the relevant research. The adjustments to her writing also included strengthening the writer's engagement with the supporting evidence. After the third group discussion, she reported that she was clearer about using an appropriate language tone in her writing.

9.2.2 Changes in Lucy's Conceptualisations of Writing

Lucy was generally happy with the metaphors she provided over the three terms and did not report any changes related to the metaphors created by herself. The most significant changes in her writing over the three terms seemed to result from

sharing and discussing her classmates' metaphors of writing, which enabled her to generate new views of writing (i.e., the reader's perspective), improve her understanding of writing (i.e., if needed an appropriate language tone) and recognise the overlooked aspects of writing (i.e., the logical links between the individual arguments and the coherence between paragraphs).

More specifically, after the first group discussion in Term 1, by looking at Tess's "sandwich" metaphor, Lucy recognised she should have made more effort to establish the links between paragraphs in order to improve the flow of argument in her writing.

In Term 2, she confirmed that she had strengthened the connections between paragraphs in her two autumn term assignments. It also can be seen from her metaphorical statements around "designing a temple" that she had recognised her misunderstanding of the overall argument, which she had previously mistakenly treated as meaning that a writer should report just a single point. The "temple" metaphor taken from a textbook had, she felt, helped her clarify functions of the different elements within an argument and the key aspects that a good argument should cover. At the second group discussion in Term 2, Lucy was a strong adherent of Tess's "necklace" metaphor and considered that focusing on the construction of logical links between the individual arguments, highlighted in Tess's metaphor, was useful in tightening up the structure of writing.

In term 3, in her accounts of her "flower arrangement" metaphor, she paid attention to arranging sets of points logically in her two spring term assignments.

Turning to Lucy's responses to the third group discussion, she noted that she began to make sense of an appropriate language tone for academic writing via Wendy's "trial" metaphor. With respect to the reader's perspective, Lucy reacted positively to Joyce's "poster presentation" metaphor. Unlike her rationale for

considering the reader's needs in Term 1 (i.e., as a way to improve the flow of argument), she felt that Joyce's metaphor offered a new dimension to engage with the reader's perspective that could be useful in refining her written ideas.

9.2.3 Changes in Sam's Conceptualisations of Writing

Looking at her responses over the three terms, Sam demonstrated noticeable changes in her writing. The results suggested that she benefited considerably from the process of sharing and discussing metaphors from other people in the group and that this accounted, in part at least, for the significant changes in her writing: resolving one of her writing problems (i.e., over-emphasis on word choice), modifying her understanding of writing (i.e., the feedback from her ESL tutor, the revisions of the draft and an appropriate language tone) and recognising aspects of writing she had overlooked (i.e., gaps/problems in literature review).

In term 1, Sam seemed to be vocal about her struggle with and anxiety about academic writing. Her responses focused on her feeling of powerlessness as a writer. Sam's "driving test" metaphor offered information in relation to her anxiety about the grade of her essay. Clearly, writing was perceived as a test-based activity and the writer seemed to be powerlessness in this scenario. She expressed her sadness about her ESL tutor's feedback on her essay, highlighted by her "rollercoaster" metaphor, because of the serious incongruity between her anticipation of, and the tutor's comments on her writing.

After the first group discussion, Sam reported increasing confidence in her writing, after she realised that she was not the only person in the group who felt stressed. She recognised the negative effect of her anxiety about grades. She also noted that she had changed her attitude to her tutor's feedback, as she had come to acknowledge the value of her tutor's comments, which could help her improve her

writing. With reference to her writing problems, Sam acknowledged that over-emphasis on word choice and vocabulary issues at the composing stage seemed to seriously block the writer's thoughts. As a result of sharing the metaphors from Lucy ("warming up in jogging"), Tina ("jigsaw") and Zara ("prescription"), she indicated her intention of changing her writing procedures. She then seemed to become very aware of the need to consider the reader's perspective, highlighted by Lucy's "tour" metaphor and came to understand its usefulness in editing her arguments. Finally, to strengthen her arguments, Tess's "sandwich" metaphor offered her a sense of the importance of adding connections between paragraphs, something to which she had not paid sufficient attention in her previous writing.

In Term 2, the feeling of helplessness she had experienced in Term 1 declined. Sam confirmed, in her autumn-term assignments, that she had given up endlessly searching for the most appropriate expressions to express her meaning at the composing stage. According to her accounts in the interview, she seemed to shift her focus to generating written ideas. Her "debate" metaphor was evidence of her changing attitude, which she flagged after the first group discussion in Term 1, to her tutor's feedback. Sam started to appreciate her tutor's comments and considered that the feedback flagged her problems (especially in constructing arguments) accurately.

After the second group discussion, Sam modified her understanding of revising drafts, considering that the multiple steps of revisions from the structure to the contents, reflected in Tina's "sculpture" metaphor and Wendy's "jigsaw" metaphor, was a more sensible approach than her previous one, which was limited to refining language. Her responses also suggested that Lucy's "documentary" metaphor allowed her to recognise the importance of highlighting gaps or problems in relevant research when writing the literature review, which, up to that

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point had been neglected.

In Term 3, Sam did confirm that she had paid attention to the research gaps and problems in her two spring assignments. The multiple stages of revision highlighted by Tina's metaphor, had also, she said, helped her plan the revisions efficiently.

After the third group discussion, Sam reported a modified recognition of the need for an appropriate language tone (i.e., an impersonal style of language) in academic writing, reflected by Wendy's "trial" metaphor, which made her feel that her previous writing was "…too subjective, precise and specific" (Sam, my trans. at her interview in Term 3). She also acknowledged the usefulness of Joyce's "poster presentation" metaphor, as it reinforced the application of using the reader's perspective to refine a writer's written thoughts—something that she intended to adopt in her future writing.

9.2.4 Changes in Tess's Conceptualisations of Writing

Tess's responses over the three terms suggested that the most recognisable changes in her writing had to do with the conversations about metaphors with her classmates in the group at the end of each term. Discussing these metaphors made it possible, she said, for her to increase her self-confidence in writing, discover her personal writing problems (namely, over-concern with both language issues and writing conventions), update her understanding of writing (i.e., revising the draft and using an appropriate language tone) and identify the overlooked aspects of writing (i.e., gaps/problems in literature review and the value of the reader's perspective).

After the first group discussion in Term 1, Tess was comforted by the observation that other people in the group had struggled similarly with writing, as

manifested in the emotion-driven metaphors (e.g., Sam's "driving" metaphor), and she reported increased confidence in her writing. She reacted positively to Tina's "jigsaw" metaphor and Lucy's "jogging" metaphor, realising that language issues, including her unfamiliarity with writing conventions in the UK, should not be treated as a major concern at the composing stage. By sharing Lucy's "tour" metaphor, she came to understand that it was of great importance to place a focus on the reader's perspectives in order to improve the flow of one's arguments.

In Term 2, Tess confirmed that Tina's "jigsaw" metaphor had worked reasonably well in generating written ideas at the pre-writing stage in her two autumn-term assignments, and led to not worrying too much about applying writing conventions. After the second metaphor-based group discussion, she felt a great relief, because her disappointment with her first draft was not as unique as she had previously imagined. Other people's reactions to their first drafts were, she found, fairly similar to hers. She recognised, from Tina's "emerging sculpture" metaphor, that writing should involve multiple steps of revisions. Having learned about the functions of the literature review from Lucy's "documentary" metaphor, Tess also hoped to change immediately the way that she dealt with literature reviews, and to make an effort to flag relevant research gaps and problems.

Tess adopted Tina's "emerging sculpture" metaphor in Term 3, carrying out the various stages of revisions in her two spring-term assignments. As she promised in Term 2, she also focused on addressing the research gaps and problems when she drafted the literature reviews for the two assignments.

After the third group discussion about personal metaphors of writing, she reported her awareness of the need to find an appropriate language style in academic writing, as writers needed to be cautious in the way they presented their findings and assertions. She also stated that Joyce's "poster presentation"

metaphor had reinforced her realisation that consideration of the reader's comprehension about the subject matter should make writers selective about presenting ideas. Therefore, she hoped to adopt this approach in her MA dissertation.

9.2.5 Changes in Tina's Conceptualisations of Writing

The significant changes foregrounded in Tina's conceptualisations of writing were related to the aspects of writing she felt might go wrong, and discussing with other people's metaphors in terms of their writing experiences at the end of each term, which led her to make and/or formulate plans for adjustments to her writing. Specifically, these changes included increasing her confidence in writing, improving her understanding of writing (i.e., adopting an impersonal style of language) and dealing with overlooked aspects of writing (i.e., writing coherence and the reader's perspective).

In Term 1, Tina noted that she felt considerable relief, when looking at the anxiety-oriented metaphors of writing (e.g., "writing is like a driving test"). As she stated at her interview, that these metaphors echoed her own frustration about academic writing, due to a lack of knowledge of writing conventions, self-identified low English competence and considerable anxiety about her assignments; however, she considered that sharing other people's experiences of struggling with writing markedly reduced her stress. Tina made positive comments on the need for an awareness of the reader in Lucy's "tour" metaphor. She felt that it could help her identify flaws in her arguments. To improve the flow of argument, she also reported that an important implication of Tess's "sandwich" metaphor was that writers needed to strengthen paragraph and sentence cohesion.

In Term 2, Tina highlighted the application of the reader's perspective in her two autumn-term assignments with her "speech" metaphor. This linked with her changed understanding of constructing an argument in writing, where writing was now perceived as a reader-writer interaction. At her follow-up interview after the second group discussion, Tina noted that she was beginning to notice the impersonal style of language mentioned in Wendy's "robot" metaphor and connected this with organising her arguments in her spring-term assignments. This was confirmed at her interview in Term 3.

After the third group discussion about individuals' metaphors, Tina reported, at her interview, an increased awareness of the usefulness of the reader's perspective at the stages of composing and revising, based on Joyce's "poster presentation" metaphor and indicated an intention to implement this in her MA dissertation. In her opinion, reading the drafts as a reader could help writers decide what to do with the contents "…which part needs more work as readers may not be clear…and which part is unnecessary as readers may already know it" (Tina, my trans. at her interview in Term 3).

9.2.6 Changes in Zara's Conceptualisations of Writing

Looking at Zara's responses over the three terms, the three metaphor-based group discussions had a positive impact on her writing, which suggested factors underlying the changes in her writing. These included gaining self-confidence in writing, identifying her writing problems (i.e., over-emphasis on word choice and constructing conclusions), improving her understanding of writing (i.e., hedging in academic writing), and recognising overlooked aspects of writing (i.e., readers' perspective).

Turning to her responses in Term 1, Zara's "prescription" metaphor

suggested that the quality of academic writing was solely reflected in the vocabulary choice that led to, as she put it at her interview, constant word searching and revising. This largely accounts for her initial frustration with academic writing. After the first group discussion about individuals' metaphors, Zara noted that she was beginning to realise that other people were suffering from the same language-related problems that caused her varying degrees of panic. Sharing other struggling writers' comments about language issues gave her a great sense of relief. Zara said she was pleased to have other people's comments on her approach to learning academic vocabulary via reading. Apart from positive reactions, an important implication (as a direct result of discussing Lucy's "jogging" metaphor and Tina's "jigsaw" metaphor) was her admission that over-emphasis on word choice and vocabulary issues at the composing stage had seriously blocked her written thoughts. She came to realise that the language issue was better not treated as a major concern. Based on Lucy's "tour" metaphor, Zara reported a new awareness of the need to consider the reader's perspective and she felt this could prove useful in helping her tighten up her arguments. She confirmed she had put this new approach into practice in her spring-term assignment in Term 2.

At the second group discussion, the most noticeable change she hoped to make in her writing resulted from her classmates' comments on her "glass bulb" metaphor and the "mining gold" metaphor regarding writing conclusions. These made her feel that her current approach to the conclusion section seemed to be problematic, because she did not include a discussion of limitations of the current work or suggested implications for future research.

In Term 3, in her "election campaign speech" metaphor, Zara confirmed that she had added discussions of limitations of the current work and implications

for future research to her conclusions, both at which had been overlooked in her writing in Term 2. At the third metaphor-based group discussion, Zara felt that Wendy's "trial" metaphor had helped her clarify the concept of hedging in academic writing. She had previously felt confused about the use of expressions, which lacked certainty, "…the main objective of an argument is to show the logic of my claims. I do not dispute people's opinions...To do this, I should avoid strong statements" (Zara, my trans. at her interview). Zara also reported that by looking at Joyce's "poster presentation" metaphor, she became aware of the value of considering the reader's perspective; she expressed her intention to adopt it to refine her written ideas in future.

9.2.7 Changes in Wendy's Conceptualisations of Writing

Based on her own writing experiences, Wendy updated her understanding of argument in writing (in Term 3). Like the other six participants, Wendy said she appreciated the process of sharing other people's experiences of writing via diverse metaphors and that this allowed her to gain confidence in writing, recognise an overlooked aspect of her writing (i.e., the audience perspective), and improve her understanding of writing (in terms of in-text referencing).

At the first group discussion in Term 1, Wendy was surprised to discover that the reasons that other people in the group struggled with writing, such as a lack of background knowledge about the subject matter, or language-related issues, were similar to hers. The activity made her feel that "worrying about writing skills at the current stage is not uncommon. Sharing writing experiences helps combat the anxiety on which blocks thrive" (Wendy, my trans. at her interview in Term 1). She noted that an important implication of Lucy's "tour" metaphor was that a writer needed to keep in mind the convictions and concerns

of people whom they want to reach; otherwise the writer might fail to select the most convincing persuasive strategies for appealing to target readers. Taking into consideration of the reader's perspective was confirmed later at her interview in Term 2. She felt the strategy was particularly useful in strengthening writing coherence in her autumn-term assignments.

At the second group discussion, by sharing Tina's metaphorical statement about making a speech to people, Wendy updated her concept of in-text referencing and noted that it could serve as supporting evidence to improve the reliability of the writer's argument, rather than function for the single purpose of avoiding plagiarism.

In Term 3, Wendy shared her experience of writing arguments in her spring-term assignments. Compared with her previous "judging a live baking competition" metaphor in Term 2, she stated that her "trial" metaphor was more appropriate for representing her new understanding of how to make an argument efficiently. Her rationale was, as she put it at her interview, "…to make readers believe the writer's assertions, more effort needs to be taken to provide sufficient evidence and show the writer's integration of the sources…" (Wendy, my trans. at her interview in Term 3); these points were not evident in the "baking competition" metaphor.

In sum, the seven participants provided evidence of varying degrees of changed conceptualisations about academic writing. They demonstrated similar trends in their self-confidence in writing; all of them increased confidence in writing after the first group discussion. Based on their responses over the three academic terms, all participants expressed their intentions to make adjustments to aspects of their writing in future and most indicated that the changes that had been made to their writing, resulting from identifying personal writing problems,

updating their understanding of writing and recognising overlooked aspects of writing.

9.3 Findings and Discussion

This section revisits the main issues arising from the metaphor analysis of participants' elicited metaphors over the three academic terms discussed in Chapters, 6, 7 and 8, which are worth noting, namely: (a) sources of participants' metaphors, (b) participants' metaphorical awareness, (c) practices of critical thinking and (d) multiple levels of metaphor-based interactions. Each is discussed below.

9.3.1 Sources of Participants' Metaphors of Writing

The study was designed to collect participants' elicited metaphors of writing via a "writing is (like)…because…" prompt. The hope was that thinking of metaphors of writing would enable students to reflect on their actual writing experiences over three academic terms, and concretise their understanding and/or concepts of writing through metaphors that can evoke visual images (see RQ 1). Looking at participants' responses over the three terms, the two aims have been achieved; however, it is worth noting that not all the metaphors were created by participants themselves through self-reflection on their individual writing activities.

It is fair to say it seems difficult to control the process of metaphor creation (see also section 3.9.2). Participants reported four sources other than their own brains from which their metaphors were generated. Three participants (Joyce, Tina and Wendy) in week 6 of Term 1 adopted examples from a 30-minute small group analysis task at the second metaphor training session in the same week (see Appendix 20) where the input was three written metaphorical statements

discussing personal metaphors of writing taken from my MA study (2007). Second, three participants (Lucy, Wendy and Joyce) borrowed their ELS tutors' metaphors of writing, either from face-to-face supervision meetings or from the feedback reports on their essays. Lucy picked up a metaphor from a textbook on writing. Lastly, by sharing metaphors with other people in the group, some participants (Joyce, Tess and Wendy) made other people's metaphors their own.

At first glance, the four ways described above to construct personal metaphors of writing seem to show the students 'cheating', because they did not fit the original design of the study, where participants were expected to recall their actual writing performance first and then generate one or more metaphor(s) to conceptualise it. One might therefore dispute whether those 'borrowed' metaphors are valid and useable (e.g., Lucy's "Writing is like designing a temple" metaphor adopted from a textbook). To answer the question, it might be helpful to examine the two criteria for valid metaphor employed in the study (see section 3.6).

To complete the metaphor prompt, each participant was not only asked to provide one or more metaphors but had to offer an explanation for the related metaphorical entailments. Any response was regarded as failure and was excluded from the analysis, if it failed to meet either of the two criteria. If we consider the "borrowed" metaphors, in Term 2, for example, Lucy noted that the "Writing is like designing a temple" metaphor that she found in a textbook of L2 writing represented her new concept of the elements of a complete logical argument and pointed out the problem with her previous concept of an overall argument. At a supervision meeting with her ELS tutor in Term 1, Joyce considered that her tutor's metaphorical statement "the wire of the necklace has broken off and thus I cannot restring the beads" (Joyce, my trans. at her interview) reinforced her realisation of a lack of logical links among sets of individual arguments in her

essay. She thus decided in Term 2 to create a metaphorical statement around "necklace", showing her new awareness about constructing the flow of her written ideas. It can be seen from these two examples above that the two participants gave detailed explanations for adopting their metaphors (either from the textbook or their writing tutors) as their own, connecting them explicitly with their writing. They therefore met both criteria perfectly. Hence, with reference to the question raised earlier of whether the 'borrowed' metaphors could and should be used in the study; the answer has to be yes.

9.3.2 Participants' Metaphorical Awareness

As discussed in Chapter 5 (see section 5.3.1), not all participants had a clear concept of metaphor (Sam, Joyce and Tess) at the start of the study and/or made sense of what I wanted them to do with metaphor (Tess, Joyce, Zara and Tina). After the first two metaphor teaching sessions (in weeks 5 and 6 of Term 1), the participants who had a problem with understanding metaphor demonstrated a much clearer awareness of it and all participants recognised the purpose of the metaphor prompt (e.g., writing is like…because…). After that, participants managed to create metaphors to conceptualise their concepts of, feelings about and problems with their writing, and extract anything they felt useful for improving their writing by means of sharing and evaluating other people's metaphors (or metaphorical statements).

Looking at the four ways in which participants borrowed metaphors and treated them as their own (see section 9.3.1), educationally it could be argued that participants certainly became sensitive to and engaged with the metaphor in discourse in which they were involved. This included metaphors in both spoken (i.e., supervision meetings with ELS writing tutors) and written discourse (i.e.

tutors' feedback reports, textbook and written analysis tasks in class). They were thus able to pick up the metaphors they felt closely related to their various aspects of writing, making sense of the correspondences between metaphors and their writing.

It thus seems reasonable to conclude that participants developed both their metaphor awareness and their sensitivity to metaphor in discourse, which increased over the three terms of the project.

9.3.3 Practices of Critical Thinking

The investigation of connections between students' metaphorical awareness and their critical thinking is not new in metaphor research. As discussed in Chapter 2 (see section 2.7.4), several researchers have suggested that students' metaphorical awareness has served as a vehicle to promote their critical thinking (see Littlemore, 2004), which refers to the "ability to assess beliefs and actions and the reasons underlying them, which involves placing a positive value on the reason assessment process and having a desire to employ it" (Siegel, 1992, cited in Tian & Low, 2011, p. 4). The results of the study indicate that participants' metaphorical awareness helped participants practise their critical thinking at least in two ways: (a) accessing the elements of a reasoned case and (b) evaluating reasoning of different kinds.

To expand the two ways explicitly, firstly, participants adopted 'writing' metaphors as their own from multiple sources (i.e., people in the group, their ELS tutors and other reading resources). Adopting a metaphor requires participants to recognise the logic of the metaphorical correspondences between the sources and relevant aspects of writing, and agree with the ideas expressed in the borrowed metaphors. For example, Wendy borrowed the "writing is like driving" metaphor

taken from the in-class group analysis task at the second metaphor teaching session in Term 1. She reacted positively to the "driving" metaphor regarding the use of a map when a driver was lost, which was metaphorically mapped onto returning to the outline in writing. She agreed with the idea highlighted by the metaphor that checking an outline could effectively resolve the writer's confusion with the development of writing at the composing stage.

Secondly, sharing and discussing other people's metaphors in the group encouraged participants to comment on other people's metaphorical statements about writing. This includes evaluating metaphorical entailments and identifying other people's writing problems. For example, based on both Wendy's and Tina's comments in Term 2 on her two metaphors "writing is like top glass bulb in an hourglass" and "writing is like mining gold", Zara started recognising that her understanding of writing a conclusion section was problematic:

> They both felt it was hard to relate the two metaphors to the two aspects of a conclusion: a discussion of limitations of the work and implications for future research. I did not have a sense of including these two aspects in my writing (Zara, my trans. at her interview).

9.3.4 Multiple Levels of Metaphor-based Interactions

It is recalled from Chapter 2 (see section 2.7.5) that there are multiple layers of educational metaphors at work on and in a given classroom at a given moment; these metaphors can derive from culturally-based 'common sense', professionals (i.e., theorists and researchers), teacher trainers, textbooks, teachers or students (Hart, 2009). Within a given culture, as Low (1999) noted, metaphors used by other groups influence those used by the group being studied and vice versa.

The present study initially targeted one group, namely, students; however, the data in the present study revealed two levels of metaphor-based interactions between interrelated groups: student-resources and student-teacher. It should be pointed out that the two types of interaction are rather unexpected, as the study was initially designed to examine the intra-group metaphorical influence in the process of sharing and discussing personal metaphors of writing (discussed in sections 6.9, 7.9 and 8.9).

To expand the two levels of interactions explicitly, the first level of metaphorical interaction resulted from students' engagement with the resources. Lucy considered that the "temple" metaphor she found in a textbook about L2 writing helped her clarify the aspects that a fair argument should cover. Additionally, comparing her understanding of argument with the definition in a textbook about L2 writing, Lucy came to realise her concept of an 'overall argument' was inaccurate.

The second level of metaphorical interaction emerged between the students and their tutors, resulting in two types of impact on participants' metaphors of writing. Firstly, three participants (Lucy, Joyce and Wendy) adopted their ELS tutors' metaphors as their own. The idea of constructing the flow of argument became very clear for Lucy in her ELS tutor's metaphor, namely, the writer as a tour guide, in an ELS session in Term 1 (see section 6.2). Both Joyce and Wendy said they really appreciated their tutor's metaphor (or metaphorical statements) regarding their writing problems used either in the feedback report (the "ingredients" metaphor about refining her written ideas) or at the supervision meeting (the "necklace" metaphor about writing coherence), as they both felt that these metaphors made them visualise which aspects of their writing had gone wrong. According to their accounts, adopting their tutors' metaphors led in both

cases to the intention to make changes and/or actually making changes to their writing. Secondly, Wendy created an additional metaphor at her interview, where she was asked to give an explanation for her metaphor "writing is like judging a live baking competition" in Term 2. The metaphor was produced in response to a question by me on expressing a writer's opinion effectively. To make her meaning clear, she produced "writing is like a robot", addressing the use of an impersonal style of language. The result was that she noted that she started to pay special attention to the tone of language, which had been obscured in her previous "baking" metaphor.

These two levels of metaphor-based interactions between interrelated groups are the supporting evidence that metaphors from one social group (i.e., textbooks or teachers in the study) are likely have to an impact on other levels (here students). In this study, participants' metaphors, which were borrowed from the textbook, created by the teachers, and generated by students themselves, worked reasonably well in improving participants' writing.

Chapter Ten: Conclusions and Implications

10.1 Preamble

In this chapter, sections 10.2 and 10.3 revisit the general aims of the study and the research design. These are followed by key overall results of the study in section 10.4. The significance and contributions of the study are discussed in section 10.5, along with the implications and potential applications of the study in section 10.6. Section 10.7 deals with the limitations of the study. Suggestions for future research are presented in section 10.8. Section 10.9 draws an overall conclusion.

10.2 Overview and General Aims of the Study

There have been a considerable number of metaphor studies, over the last decade, which have employed metaphors to uncover participants' conceptualisations of teaching and/or learning; very few studies have focussed on their language skills, such as writing. In the light of this, the present study adopted an exploratory stance, exploring Chinese MA students' conceptualisations of academic writing practices, particularly the required writing assignments/essays that they had to complete in an academic year (2009-2010), by means of analysing metaphors they created in the 'X is Y' form (e.g., "academic writing is…because…"). The study employed a version of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and Vygotskyan notions of the interactive nature of language (i.e., metaphor) and thought (Vygotsky, 1978) within Sociocultural Theory, whereby metaphor is seen as both a cognitive tool for conceptualisation and as a social phenomenon (Littlemore & Low, 2006), with language as one of several means of expressing it. Metaphor can accordingly act as a mediational tool whereby interpretations are constructed from accounts given by people in specific social environments

(Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). By examining individual students' metaphorical conceptualisations of writing over the three academic terms, the hope was that the results could not only shed light on how students developed their writing, focussing primarily on changes in their conceptualisations of writing, but also establish whether such changes would lead to adjustments in their writing practices.

Additionally, very few metaphor researchers have argued for the investigation of metaphor-based interaction in class; this is thus as an underrepresented area in metaphor research, even though there is evidence that it can lead to changes in participants' behaviour, in particular to an improvement in their language skills, such as writing (i.e., Armstrong, 2009; Hart, 2009; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005; Wan, 2007). The present study was thus intended to explore the impact of sharing other people's metaphors of writing in group discussions on individuals' personal writing.

Methodologically, the study examined the validity of a set of decontextualised 'think of a metaphor' tasks (see Chapters 3 & 5), investigated the linguistic contexts where task difficulty/failure to complete this kind of task occurred and offered possible solutions, by introducing training both about metaphor and in using it.

It is far less easy in a qualitative than a quantitative study to give a succinct summary of answers to the research questions, so I will limit myself here to indicating where each question was discussed, and then pick up the major findings of the study (see section 10.4).

The main research questions and the sub-questions for the current study were:

RQ1 How do the students metaphorically conceptualise their academic

writing experiences over a year-long MA programme? (answered chapters 6, 7 and 8).

RQ2 What happens when the students enter into a discussion about their metaphors of writing? (answered sections 6.9, 7.9 and 8.9)

RQ2.1 What effects might these discussion-based metaphor activities have on students' understandings of writing?

RQ2.2 In what ways could discussing metaphors for writing be a useful tool, in terms of enabling students to learn about others' concepts of writing?

RQ2.3 Do students modify or change their metaphors of writing when they discuss and share metaphors with their classmates? And if so, in what way(s) do they do it?

RQ 2.4 If the students make adjustments to their metaphors of writing, how far do they make changes in their conceptualisations of their writing practice?

RQ3 How do students' conceptualisations of writing change over the course of year-long MA programme? (answered in chapter 9)

RQ4 How far and why do the students find it difficult to complete metaphor elicitation tasks in the 'X is Y' format? (answered in sections 3.7.2, 3.8.2 and 5.3.3)

RQ 4.1 What proportion of students finds the task problematic?

RQ 4.2 What is the nature of the problem(s)?

RQ 4.3 Which factors appear to be responsible for their difficulties in conceptualising writing metaphorically?

RQ5 Are there any possible solutions which can resolve the methodological problems? (answered in sections 5.4 and 5.5)

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At a general level, it was hoped that, through the study, a better understanding could be achieved of (a) how Chinese MA students used metaphor to conceptualise their academic writing practice, (b) what effects group discussions of individuals' personal metaphors of writing had on their writing, (c) how participants developed their academic writing in a year-long MA programme and (d) how to tackle methodological problems with using a metaphor elicitation task.

10.3 Research Design

The present study adopted a phenomenological and qualitative approach and involved two phases: a methodological preliminary study and a main study.

Data for the preliminary study were collected in November 2008. The three-week long study was used to investigate how participants would respond to a range of writing-related prompts, requesting explanations for task difficulty/failure, so that the task format which led to the most successful answers could be adopted in the main study. The aim was also to collect reasons for task difficulty in greater detail than Davis (2009) had reported, so that appropriate preparation could be made ahead of the later main study. 17 Chinese MA students in the Department of Education at the University of York signed written consent forms indicating voluntary participation. All were females and had first degrees in language and/or education. Three types of prompt were designed (see Appendix 2): asking for a metaphor without prescribed structure; constructing an 'X is (like) Y' metaphor; and extending the 'X is (like) Y' format either in the form of a conditional ("If X was like Y…") or an as-simile ("X is as Y as Z"). In all cases, participants were asked to give their metaphorical reasoning by completing a "because…" statement. In general, each response was subjected to the following

two quality assessment criteria: (1) whether it used metaphor to conceptualise the topic and (2) whether it provided an explanation after 'because…' which explained the intended meaning of the metaphors. Any response was regarded as failure, if it failed to meet either criterion. Data were collected from participants' answers to these metaphor prompts and follow-up interviews. The results of students' completion of the various forms of metaphor elicitation tasks helped construct the metaphor prompt to be used in the main study. In addition, establishing the key factors which contribute to task difficulties/failures helped the main study establish a framework of training (see Chapter 5) to be used to help participants complete the writing-related metaphor elicitation task in the main study.

Data for the main study were collected between October 2009 and June 2010. The study was conducted in a context of nine academic writing workshops over three academic terms (see section 4.6.1), where seven Chinese Masters' students were asked to (1) provide metaphors of their writing in the 'X is Y' format (e.g., "writing is…because…") and (2) share with their classmates metaphors in relation to personal writing experiences. To reduce the incidence of unsuccessful answers to the metaphor elicitation tasks, all participants in Term 1 were also asked to attend a 'Learning to Use Metaphor' training programme in the form of four ready-made metaphor related lectures (discussed in Chapter 5). Data for the main study were collected from students' responses to the metaphor prompt, from audio-recorded interviews and from video-recorded classroom observations as well as my field notes. As explained in Chapter 4, the analysis of data in each term was broken down into two separate phases. The first phase dealt with participants' responses to the metaphor prompt, involving my preliminary analysis of their responses to the metaphor prompt, checking with participants

regarding my preliminary interpretations at their individual follow-up interviews and modifying my analysis if any mismatch was identified between my interpretations of participants' metaphors and their intended meanings. The second phase was to examine the impact of sharing and discussing individuals' personal metaphors of writing on participants' writing via examining their comments at follow-up interviews, video-recorded classroom observations, my field notes and their written overall evaluation. Finally, by analysing their responses across the three terms, I identified what, if any, changes occurred in each participant's conceptualisations of writing (see Chapter 9).

10.4 Key Overall Findings and Discussions

The preliminary study and the main study resulted in six main findings (1) metaphors were used to convey multiple aspects of students' conceptualisations of writing (RQ 1); (2) sharing and discussing personal metaphors helped participants improve their writing (RQ 2); (3) participants demonstrated varying degrees of change in their conceptualisations of academic writing (RQ 3); (4) participants became more sensitised to metaphor, and to thinking critically about it (RQs 1 & 2); (5) the use of a metaphor elicitation technique to examine informants' conceptualisations was not methodologically transparent (RQ 4), and (6) training both about metaphor and in using it were important (RQ 5). Each is discussed below.

10.4.1 Metaphors Were Used to Convey Multiple Aspects of Students' Conceptualisations of Writing

Seven participants' metaphorical written statements provided empirical evidence of how metaphors were used to convey various aspects of their conceptualisations of academic writing. This included:

(a) Showing participants' concepts of writing. For example, in Term 1, both Tina's "writing is like making a jigsaw puzzle" and Lucy's "writing is like warming up in jogging" vividly depicted the process of moving back and forth to rework writers' written ideas, reinforcing the perception that writing was indeed a process of discovering and making meaning.

(b) Expressing their personal feelings (emotion/attitude) towards writing. For instance, it can be seen that Sam's two metaphors in Term 1, namely, "writing is like sitting in a rollercoaster" and "writing is a driving test" were both emotion-driven, expressing her sadness regarding her ELS tutor's comments and her anxiety about the grade of her essay.

(c) Highlighting personal problems/difficulties in writing. For instance, Sam's "writing is like making a plan for weight loss" metaphor in Term 2, exhibited how the outline failed to guide her writing, which was rather unexpected, like sudden weight gain.

(d) Presenting personal strategies for academic writing. Tina, for example, shared her approach to planning revisions of her drafts, suggesting three types of revision: organisational revision, content-related revision and the surface-level revision, which were highlighted by her "emerging sculpture" metaphor in Term 2.

10.4. 2 Sharing and Discussing Personal Metaphors Helped Participants

   Improve Their Writing

Based on the comments extracted from their interviews (see sections 6.9, 7.9 and 8.9) and their overall written evaluation (see section 8.10) of three group discussions about individuals' personal metaphors of writing, the participants stated that this kind of metaphor-based interaction had been beneficial for several reasons.

   Firstly, there was a general acknowledgement that sharing other people's metaphors of writing helped them concretise and synthesise their concepts of writing. This included capturing ideas of writing that the participants could identify with, and generating new views of writing. For instance, in term 3, Tess adopted Tina's "writing is like an emerging sculpture" metaphor that she heard in the second group discussion in Term 2. She thought Tina's metaphor exactly represented a multi-step approach to revision that she carried out in Term 3. Turning to generating new views of writing, both Wendy and Lucy, for instance, felt that Tina's "writing is like giving a speech" metaphor that was created in Term 2 brought a new interpretation of the use of in-text referencing that went beyond their previous understanding of in-text citation simply as a way of avoiding plagiarism. They came to realise that the in-text referencing could actually serve as strong evidence to improve the reliability of the writer's argument, because "it showed my points have been supported by other people in different studies" (Lucy, my trans. at her interview).

   Secondly, all participants pointed out that group discussion about personal metaphors allowed them to identify their own writing problems. For example, in Zara's reactions to the second group discussion at the end of Term 2, she said both Wendy's and Tina's comments on her two conclusion-related metaphors (i.e.,

"writing is like a top glass bulb" and "writing is like mining gold") made her start to recognise that her understanding of a conclusion section in writing was problematic, due to not considering the limitations of the work or implications for future research.

Thirdly, all participants felt that they had gained confidence in writing by sharing other people's feelings towards, and difficulties in, writing. As Sam put it after the first group discussion in Term 1:

It is a big relief, as everyone in this group experienced stress. It is good to know we had some common writing problems such as refining language and establishing argument. In addition, it seems that we had varying levels of difficulty in academic writing adjustment. I was not stupid as I previously thought (Sam, orig. words at her interview).

Lastly, all participants stated that after sharing other people's metaphors, they had made adjustments to, or formulated plans for changes to their writing. The adjustments to writing that were actually made were a result of implementing new views of writing, and the act of resolving relevant writing problems. For example, in Term 2, Zara reported that she added a discussion about problems with and limitations of her study and suggestions for future research in her spring term assignments. She claimed this was due to Wendy's and Tina's queries at the second group discussion, regarding her metaphors of constructing conclusions in writing. To implement her new view of revision, Tess in Term 3 adopted a three-step revision procedure, triggered by Tina's "sculpture" metaphor, which consisted of organisational revision, content-related revision and the language revision, abandoning her previous perception of revising a draft as an activity that

primarily affected surface aspects of her texts as she put it in the metaphor, "revising is like cleaning the dust after reconstruction of a house" in Term 2. Turning to their responses related to formulating plans for change to their writing, five participants (Zara, Lucy, Tina, Sam, Tess) in Term 3 reported that the use of the reader's perspective highlighted by Joyce's "Writing is like giving a poster presentation" metaphor could be useful in selecting written ideas and/or revising contents, and as a result they therefore hoped to adopt it when they started to work on their MA dissertations.

10.4.3 Participants Demonstrated Varying Degrees of Change in Their Conceptualisations of Academic Writing

Participants' metaphorical conceptualisations of academic writing and their responses to the three metaphor-based discussions over the three academic terms suggested varying degrees of changes in personal conceptualisations of writing, resulting from their modified and/or generated new understanding of various aspects of writing and the awareness of their personal writing problems. This section synthesises changes in personal writing on an individual basis.

Joyce

Joyce's changed conceptualisations of academic writing over the three academic terms included the following aspects:

(1) She gave up her previous view of writing as an assessment-based activity, whereby the sole object for a writer was to achieve a passing grade, as she felt that such a view of writing introduced an emotional barrier to her writing, leading to increased frustration, which actually decreased her productivity.

(2) She came to realise that refining language should not be treated as a major concern at the composing stage and started concentrating on generating ideas.

(3) She gained a new awareness of writing as writer-reader communication, recognising the usefulness of considering her readers when identifying the flaws and gaps in her arguments, searching the published literature and deciding if the contents needed to be included.

(4) She acknowledged the important role of writing coherence in strengthening her arguments and started to focus on constructing the logical links between items in her line of argument.

(5) To strengthen her arguments, she also came to see that attention needed to be paid to tightening the connections between the writer's claims and the chosen supporting evidence.

(6) She modified her previous understanding regarding writing literature review and paid more attention to flagging research problems/gaps.

(7) She became clear about the elements involved in an argument, particularly the concept of a writer's overall argument that she previously understood.

(8) She began to understand the need for an appropriate academic tone in her writing.

Lucy

Lucy's changed conceptualisations of academic writing over the three academic terms included the following aspects:

(1) She came to realise she needed to establish links between paragraphs and that this could improve the flow of her arguments.

(2) She began to gain an appreciation of the necessity to arrange sets of her arguments logically, in order to tighten up the structure of her writing.

(3) She recognised her misunderstanding of an 'overall point', which she had mistakenly treated as being a writer's single argument.

(4) She started to make sense of the use of an appropriate academic tone in writing.

(5) She reported a new awareness of the use of the reader's perspectives in refining her written ideas.

Sam

Sam's changed conceptualisations of academic writing over the three academic terms included the following aspects:

(1) She came to see the negative impact of her concept of writing as a test-based activity.

(2) She stopped feeling frustrated about the feedback reports from her ELS tutor and began to treat her tutor's critical comments in a positive way.

(3) She identified that her idea of resolving language issues during composing seriously blocked her writing and she shifted her attention to generating substantive ideas for contents.

(4) She became very aware of the need to consider the reader's perspective, particularly when editing her arguments and refining her written thoughts.

(5) She recognised that it was of great importance to establish the links between paragraphs to improve her arguments.

(6) She modified her previous comprehension of revising a draft which was limited to resolving the language issue, and came to see that employing a multi-step revision process, involving organisational revision,

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content-related revision and the language revision, was a more sensible approach, helping her plan her revisions more efficiently.

(7) She reported a new awareness that writing a literature review should cover the gaps and problems in relevant research.

(8) She identified her problem with using academic tone in her writing and made sense of the impersonal style of language that the Department of Education valued.

Tess

Tess's changed conceptualisations of academic writing over the three academic terms included the following aspects:

(1) She abandoned revising the texts during the composing phase to match the conventions of standard written English and now stated that she should give emphasis to generating ideas for the contents of her assignments.

(2) She gained an awareness of the need to consider the reader's needs and acknowledged the value of this for revising her arguments and being selective about presenting her ideas.

(3) She changed her understanding of revisions as a proofreading/minor editing activity, with the single goal of fixing the errors, and reported that the revisions needed to consist of reconstructing writing at the content level, the structural level and the language level.

(4) She made adjustments to the way that she dealt with literature reviews by flagging relevant research gaps/problems.

(5) She highlighted her awareness of adopting an appropriate language style in academic writing that required writers to be cautious in the way that findings would be presented.

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Tina

Tina's changed conceptualisations of academic writing over the three academic terms included the following aspects:

(1) She started to think about the reader's perspective, perceiving writing as a reader-writer communication. She reacted positively to its application in editing her arguments and became selective about the ideas for contents to be included.

(2) She made sense of the impersonal style of language, making it connect with presenting her arguments effectively.

(3) She reported a new awareness of improving the flow of an argument by means of strengthening the links between paragraphs and improving the sentence cohesion.

Wendy

Wendy's changed conceptualisations of academic writing over the three academic terms included the following aspects:

(1) She became aware that a writer needed to keep in mind the convictions and concerns of people whom they wanted to reach; otherwise the writer might fail to select the most convincing persuasive strategies for appealing to target readers.

(2) She updated her understanding of in-text referencing, as something that could serve as supporting evidence to improve the reliability of a writer's argument, rather than something that functioned for the single purpose of avoiding plagiarism.

(3) She reported a new understanding of an efficient argument, which required a writer not only to state his/her position regarding the subject

matter, but also to provide sufficient convincing evidence and demonstrate the writer's engagement with them.

Zara

Zara's changed conceptualisations of academic writing over the three academic terms included the following aspects:

(1) She recognised that an over-emphasis on searching for vocabulary at the composing stage had seriously blocked her written thoughts.

(2) She reported a new awareness of the need to consider the reader's perspective and acknowledged its application in tightening up her arguments and being selective about presenting her ideas.

(3) She gained a new awareness about writing a conclusion section; it should include a discussion of limitations of the current work and suggest implications for future research.

(4) She started to clarify the concept of hedging in writing and understand the rationale for using expressions, which conveyed a lack of certainty.

A general impression was that four aspects of writing were commonest or foregrounded most in participants' changed conceptualisations of writing:

(1) All participants gained an increasing awareness of writing as reader-writer communication and of the usefulness of considering the reader's perspective.

(2) Four participants (Tess, Sam, Zara and Joyce) started to recognise that an over-emphasis on language issues, particularly at the composing stage, badly affected their progress.

(3) Five participants (Tess, Tina, Sam, Lucy and Joyce) began to recognise the importance of employing an appropriate language style in academic writing.

(4) Four participants (Joyce, Lucy, Sam and Tina) became aware of the great importance of considering writing coherence in improving the quality of their written arguments.

10.4.4 Participants Became more Sensitised to Metaphors and to Thinking Critically about Them

In the present study, sets of metaphor-related activities, namely, the four metaphor-based lectures in Term 1, metaphorical conceptualisations of individuals' writing and the group discussions of personal metaphors of writing over the three academic terms, seemed to largely account for participants' increasing metaphorical awareness. The results suggested that participants became more sensitised to metaphors over the three terms, which in turn, helped them think critically about metaphors that they had met (i.e., from the metaphor-based group discussions, from supervision meetings with their ELS tutors and from reading sources) in at least two ways: (a) identifying the elements of a reasoned case and (b) evaluating reasoning of different kinds.

Firstly, in addition to thinking of metaphors by themselves, participants borrowed 'writing' metaphors from other sources, including group discussions, reading sources and their ELS tutors. Adopting a metaphor requires participants to (a) recognise the logic of the metaphorical correspondences and their entailments between the source and the target, namely, relevant aspects of writing and (b) evaluate and agree with the ideas expressed in the borrowed metaphors. For example, the use of their ELS tutors' metaphors of writing obtained either from

their supervision meetings or tutors' feedback (by Lucy, Joyce and Wendy) meant that they engaged critically with metaphors outside the research classroom (i.e., nine academic writing workshops).

Secondly, the metaphor-based group discussions allowed participants to comment on other people's metaphors. This included evaluating the metaphorical correspondences within a metaphor and identifying other people's writing problems.

10.4.5 The Use of A Metaphor Elicitation Technique To Examine Informants' Conceptualisations Was Not Methodologically Transparent

The results from both the preliminary study (see Chapter 3) and the main study (see Chapter 5) suggested that a high proportion of the participants were unable to complete the type of metaphor elicitation task successfully. These unsuccessful answers to prompts, at a general level, were repeatedly found to involve non-metaphorical statements, no provision of a rationale for metaphorical reasoning or simply no answer at all. Metaphor elicitation tasks cannot therefore be seen as method-free.

With reference to the likely reasons for participants' task difficulty/failure, a limited understanding of metaphor and uncertainty about the usefulness of metaphor creation seemed to be the major problems. The participants in both the preliminary study and the main study did not react negatively to being forced to construct and think about an 'X is Y' metaphor; they simply wanted to be convinced that the task was not a futile one. They did, however, find that their confusion about the point of the task impeded their ability to think of a metaphor. This seems not to have been addressed to date in most of the published research. Secondly, although the three problems identified in the preliminary study

involving unfamiliarity with the target topic (two participants' reactions to academic writing), formulation of the task requiring more than one 'X is Y' mapping and the block caused by the use of *like*, might be less frequent, they nevertheless suggested fairly strongly that researcher-structured prompts should always be piloted and then adapted on the basis of pilot study findings.

10.4.6 Training both About Metaphor and in Using It Were Important

In the main study, to reduce the risk of task failure resulting from inappropriate understandings of metaphor and lack of familiarity with metaphor creation, training was provided in the form of four metaphor-related lectures (see section 5.4).

Very few previous studies have explored in much detail regarding what sort of training activities work. In this case, in the follow-up interviews the students reported that six of the activities had served to change their understanding of metaphor. The common factor in five of the six was active engagement with empirical data, with critical evaluation added in the sixth (see Chapter 5). The six activities allowed the students to (a) establish, where needed, a working definition of metaphor, (b) make sense of the rationales for metaphor creation in education, (c) understand the importance of "because" explanations and (d) generate explanations for their personal metaphors.

It is worth noting that understanding metaphor appropriately can be seen as involving two levels: metaphor as a purely linguistic device; and metaphor as a cognitive mechanism for conceptualisation. Clearly, in metaphor conceptualisation studies, a series of metaphor elicitation tasks focus on the function of metaphor at a cognitive level, and normally draw inferences from the metaphors that people use to express their thinking, attitudes and behaviour.

However, the participants' responses from both the preliminary study and the main study showed that the cognitive use of metaphor was not transparent to people who lacked basic technical knowledge of this field. They seemed to be struggling with associating metaphor with concepts and thoughts, giving rise to questions like "Why is metaphor needed?". To establish a working definition of metaphor and ultimately reduce task confusion, it thus becomes equally important to introduce metaphor both linguistically and cognitively in this kind of research context.

10.5 Significance and Contributions of the Study

The current study represents an original and exploratory empirical contribution to the field by examining how metaphor can act as a mediational tool, whereby Chinese MA students interpret their academic writing via their metaphorical accounts.

As discussed in Chapter 2, there are few details in the literature concerning how to resolve the methodological problems with this sort of metaphor elicitation technique. Davis (2009) remains one of the few studies that attempts to supply participants with examples of metaphor. Nevertheless, it looks as though the salient examples did not work for those participants who lacked a basic knowledge of metaphor. Unlike the metaphor-analysis studies discussed earlier, the present study not only collected information on task problems, but also offered some preliminary considerations of training issues, helping participants establish a working definition of metaphor and clarifying the value of metaphor creation (see Wan, 2011).

In addition, numerous studies in the last two decades have investigated language teachers' and learners' understandings of teaching and/or learning

through metaphor analysis. However, there is a shortage of empirical studies, which investigate the use of metaphor, as a methodology, to interpret participants' conceptualisations (by the researchers) of their specific language skills such as academic writing (Armstrong, 2009; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005; Hart, 2009; Wan, 2007). It accordingly remains unclear how far metaphor can be used to understand participants' writing. In the present study, however, the fact that the research design and methods used managed to generate critical thought and discussion about writing, as well as changes and/or plans for changes to individuals' personal writing, strongly suggests that explicit metaphor conceptualisation can be used as a valid means of uncovering participants' beliefs about writing, personal writing problems and solutions to those problems.

Beyond this, the study is intended as a contribution to the current dearth of research on how Chinese students develop their writing in a one-year MA programme in the UK.

10.6 Implications and Applications of the Study

Implications and applications of the present study can be drawn from two perspectives: research applications, and implications for educational practice.

10.6.1 Implications for Educational Practice

10.6.1.1 Practise Critical Thinking in Metaphor-based Interaction

As discussed earlier (see section 9.3.3), the group discussions of personal metaphors allowed students to critically comment on each other's metaphors, including evaluating metaphorical correspondences within a metaphor and identifying other people's writing problems. From a pedagogical standpoint, such a kind of metaphor-based 'critical dialogue', involving discussions about

metaphors of teaching and/or learning (not limited to writing) between students and/or teachers can be a possible means of promoting students' critical thinking, where students are forced to think and comment on the correspondences of the metaphors as well as the related underlying implications for teaching and learning.

10.6.1.2 Metaphor as a Teaching Tool

The results made it clear that not all the metaphors were created by the participants themselves through reflection on their own writing activity. Participants reported four other sources, from which their metaphors were generated, one of which was their ELS tutors. Three participants (Lucy, Wendy and Joyce) borrowed their ESL tutors' metaphors of writing, either from face-to-face supervision meetings or from feedback reports on their essays, as they felt that these metaphors made them clarify which aspects of their writing were going wrong and offered clues to possible solutions. As the study did not include interviewing students' ELS tutors, it is therefore not clear how far the tutors were aware of using metaphor to flag students' problems. For tutors, who are unaware that they are using metaphor in their feedback and/or supervision meetings with their students, it might be useful if they could become aware that the integration of metaphor could promote their students' understanding of their writing problems, so that they could keep exploring metaphors to improve student-teacher communication.

In addition, it can be seen from participants' metaphors of writing over the three academic terms that, some metaphors seem to be much more influential than others and were met with a higher degree of acceptance. From a pedagogical standpoint, it would appear that these 'powerful' metaphors of writing, such as Lucy's "tour" metaphor with an emphasis on the reader's perspective, and

Wendy's "judging a live baking competition" metaphor about using an impersonal style of language, can be usefully employed by teachers of writing in concretising abstract concepts (e.g., the reader's perspective) in their writing classes.

10.6.2 Research Applications

10.6.2.1 Using a post-hoc technique

As explained in section 4.10, the process of data analysis involved two steps: my preliminary analysis of students' metaphors of writing and individual follow-up interviews. The results show that the follow-up interview worked reasonably well in two ways: I could clarify any the ambiguous metaphorical mappings, and I could modify my analysis if a discrepancy was identified between participants' intended meanings and my interpretations. The use of post-hoc questioning therefore served as a validation technique, reducing researcher bias in the sort of study where the researcher's personal understanding inevitably affects the interpretation of the data.

In addition, the recycling effect of having the follow-up interviews after each round of collection of their metaphors, over the three terms, might have enabled participants to get used to the pattern of data collection, which meant that they were likely, after the first round, to prepare their answers to the questions that they might be asked at the next interviews about their metaphor, after or even while, they generated their metaphors. This may, in turn, have facilitated participants' engagement with the metaphor elicitation task. An implication for research is that using such a 'recycling' design can effectively promote students to participate in this sort of metaphor elicitation task; in this case, a qualitative longitudinal research design seems appropriate, as the recycling effect of having the interviews takes time, and the interaction would be hard to treat statistically.

10.6.2.2 Offering an Explanation for Metaphors

The results suggested that asking participants to offer an explanation for why a metaphor was appropriate by filling in the 'because' section in the metaphor elicitation task (e.g., academic writing is…, because…) was necessary to allow me, as the researcher, to identify the metaphorical correspondences between the sources and the target (i.e., writing), and to understand the meaning underlying the metaphors, particularly in the case of metaphors with inappropriate systematic mappings between a source and a target and/or with implicit metaphorical correspondences.

In addition, the 'because…' phrase was also found to be fairly important, where participants used the same metaphor. For example, both Tina (in Term 1) and Wendy (in Term 2) gave "writing is like making a jigsaw puzzle"; however, their statements after 'because' implied different meanings lay behind the two instances of its use: Tina employed the "jigsaw" metaphor to highlight the process of generating her written ideas, whereas, in Wendy's case, the metaphor foregrounded revising drafts.

In sum, the research finding again supported the suggestion noted by other researchers (Jin & Cortazzi 2011; Wan, Low, & Li 2011) that the 'because' section, especially when accompanied by follow-up interviews can improve the validation of the researchers' interpretations of participants' metaphors.

10.6.2.3 Longitudinal Studies of Students

Each participant in the study provided various metaphors over the three ten-week academic terms, presenting their changed conceptualisations of writing. An implication for data collection is that, to gain a complete picture of the informants' 'unstable' conceptualisations via their metaphors, a longitudinal research design,

is likely to be more appropriate than many metaphor studies in this area, which ask informants to construct their metaphors instantly or during a short period of time. In addition, it seems unreasonable to somehow assume that, participants' conceptualisations deriving from their metaphors, which were collected on a short-term basis, can represent the informants' conceptualisations over time. A longitudinal research design allows researchers to periodically collect and analyse participants' metaphors, and gain a better understanding of how and why students' conceptualisations change over time.

10.7 Limitations for the Study

Although the present study has yielded findings that have both practical and pedagogical implications, its design is not without limitations.

The first limitation concerns the sampling. In the study, seven MA participants were recruited on a strictly volunteer basis; it is thus not possible to view this sample as a representative sampling of the Chinese MA population in the UK. For example, students who were not comfortable with talking about their academic writing may not be willing to participate. Secondly, seven participants is a small sample size. The study needs to be replicated with a larger sample for the purpose of confirming the results. In addition, the participants in this study were all females. Therefore, the findings might not apply to male students.

There is also a problem related to data gathering, which derives from the fact that the current study is based on interviews and classroom observations. Patton (2002) points out that the very act of observing affects what is being observed. This point seems to apply socially as well as to quantum physics. It is difficult to see if the participants suffered from my and/or the camera's presence, despite my efforts to be unobtrusive.

In addition, the data collection was finished by the end of Term 3, so that there was no chance to follow participants over the summer vacation, when they were dealing with their MA dissertations. To establish better the extent to which their action plans of writing proposed in Term 3 were implemented, and to form a more complete picture of the development of students' writing in a year-long MA programme, it would have been useful to consider their conceptualisations in relation to writing their MA dissertations.

10.8 Suggestions for Future Research

While this study demonstrates the value of the use of metaphor-based activities in writing research, it also leaves much room for future study in applied linguistic or educational research.

The present study focused on metaphorical influence between students by investigating the effects on individuals' writing of sharing and discussing metaphors of writing with other people in the group. A possible area for future exploration is the interaction between, and development of, metaphor use between university teachers and students at Master's level. It would be interesting to investigate what effects the discussion-based metaphor activities have on both students' and teacher's views of writing, and whether and how far metaphors of writing can function as a useful pedagogical tool, bringing both parties to a better understanding of each other's positions.

In addition, one participant (Lucy) picked up a metaphor from a textbook on writing, which she thought helped her clarify her concept of writing (i.e., relating to 'overall argument'). It would be interesting to develop a more comprehensive list of metaphors in the area of writing research from textbooks and get students' reactions to them. It would also be interesting to have students

choose the metaphors from the writing research that they feel may influence them or that they have strong reactions to, and examine what will happen when they share those metaphors with other students and discuss them.

This study also suggested that some ELS tutors used metaphors to flag students' writing problems. More research could be done on how metaphor serves this important function for language teachers and how far teachers are aware of their pedagogical metaphors.

10.9 Concluding Thoughts

In conclusion, this study has taken an exploratory step in the direction of examining the application of metaphor analysis to uncover participants' understandings of one language skill; specifically, it investigated academic writing in a small group of Chinese students enrolled on a year-long MA programme in the UK.

To judge from participants' metaphors (including their metaphorical statements) about their academic writing experiences, metaphors were (a) utilised for reflecting on their processes of writing; (b) used to construct their conceptualisations of writing and (c) mediated understanding of their beliefs/understanding about writing effectively.

In addition, participants' responses revealed that the discussion-based metaphor activities worked reasonably well in generating and/or modifying individuals' views of writing, identifying personal writing problems, and leading to adjustments to their writing.

A comparison of participants' conceptualisations at the different stages over the three academic terms showed that participants came to the MA

programme with a diverse range of understandings, experiences, and expectations about academic writing.

Clearly, there is much work to be done in the application of metaphor analysis to research in language and education, particularly in uncovering people's beliefs and understandings of their specific language skills. It is hoped this study can be an early step and will serve to shed light on a meaningful framework within which to do so and a useful methodology for collecting and analysing data for more extensive studies.

Appendix 1   **Letter of Consent for Students**

Oct 2008

Dear Participants,

I am a PhD student in the Department of Education at the University of York. I am conducting a research study to generate knowledge about ESL students' understanding of academic writing as they begin their transition to post-graduate level studies via an analysis of the metaphors they create and employ, when they reflect on and describe their writing via writing-related metaphor prompts.

I am requesting your participation in a methodological preliminary study, where you will be asked to complete three sets of "thinking of a metaphor" tasks. The task format, which leads to the most successful answers, will be adopted in the main study.

In addition, you will be asked to attend individual follow-up interviews, which will be audio-taped. The purpose of the interviews is to better understand your reactions to the elicitation tasks, including collecting the reasons for your task difficulties/problems, so that appropriate preparation will be made ahead of the main study. The tapes will not be available to anyone other than me.

The activities will take about 30 minutes. All the data collected will be destroyed after this study is completed. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at (xxx)

xxx-xxxx or email me <u>ww510@york.ac.uk</u>.

Sincerely,

Wan Wan

The Department of Education

University of York

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Voluntary Consent Form

By signing below, I have fully read and understand the information presented in the form and that I agree to participate voluntarily in the project. I realise that my participation as a respondent in the study is confidential and that I can withdraw my intention at any given time at my behest. I will keep a copy of this Informed Consent Form for my personal safekeeping.

Signature   Printed Name   Date

Email:

Appendix 2   Preliminary Study: Three Metaphor Elicitation Tasks

(Metaphor Group)

Task 1: Please choose which you think is an appropriate metaphor to explore your experiences or feelings about writing for academic purposes (i.e. academic writing).

Task 2: Writing diaries is…because…

Task 3: If writing an assignment is…, then…, because…

If you have any problems or difficulties in producing a metaphor, please try to explain the problem.

If you want to add any comments to explain your reactions to the task, please do so.
****

(Simile Group)

Task 1: Please choose which you think is an appropriate metaphor to explore your experiences or feelings about writing for academic purposes (i.e., academic writing).

Task 2: Writing diaries is like…because…

Task 3: Writing an assignment is as…as…, because…

If you have any problems or difficulties in producing a metaphor, please try to explain the problem.

If you want to add any comments to explain your reactions to the task, please do so.

Appendix 3   **Main study: A Metaphor Elicitation Task**

I would like to know how you understand academic writing. Please think through a list of possible metaphors in the form of 'X is Y' to describe your experiences or feelings when you cope with academic writing (e.g., mid-term essays and assignments). You need to select at least one writing metaphor and justify it by offering an explanation. You are allowed to use either English or Chinese to construct your answers.

Appendix 4 **Participant Recruitment Advertisement**

Volunteers Wanted

Interested in getting involved an ACADEMIC WRITING WORKSHOP?

How well do you write and understand EAP (English for academic writing purposes) writing?
Do you want to master your EAP writing processes?
Do you want to identify your strengths and specific needs in EAP writing?

Come and see!!!

[Contents & Aims]

A doctoral student in the department of Educational Studies at the University of York is looking for volunteers who meet the description above to participate in a free EAP writing workshop**. Be part of a doctoral research project; the workshop is intended to provide, over the three terms, a setting for participants to understand the overall structure of EAP writing and improve their skills & abilities to perform academic written tasks.

This will include a focus on rhetorical conventions of EAP writing to determine the potential difficulties students could experience during the composing processes and ultimately help students apply their writing knowledge to their own writing. Participants will have opportunities to explore their writing processes, which is useful when identifying problems with specific processes in particular. As part of the workshop, some time will spent on critiquing previous research papers, allowing participants to practise the critical thinking skills they need for MA assignments & dissertations,

**The workshop will not focus on improving grammar and vocabulary but the tutors will be able to recommend areas for improvement for self-study.

[Workshop Duration]

There will be 9 sessions and run on a monthly basis over the academic year (Oct 2009—Jun 2010). Each session will last roughly 1.5-2 hours.

[CONTACT]

If you are interested in participating or would like more information, please contact Wan Wan, ww510@york.ac.uk

Appendix 5   **Academic Literacy Background**

Please read the following directions before starting the questionnaire.

A. The questionnaire seeks information on your academic writing history, preferences and your perceptions of your achievement. It consists of two sections grouped under the following two headings: (1) General Information and (2) Academic English Writing.

The first section asks for demographic information including disciplinary background and language proficiency. The second section consists of two open-ended questions, asking about your academic writing experiences more precisely.

B. Completing this questionnaire will take about 30 minutes.

<div style="text-align:center">

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!

Wan Wan

</div>

Section A: General Information

Please complete the following items by answering the questions or writing a 'X'

for YES.

1. Name? _____

2. Nationality _____

3. What is your gender? Male ◯   Female ◯

4.   What   is   your   level   of   education   before   study   in   York?
_____

5. What was (were) your academic subject(s) of your first degree (s)?
_____

6. Please indicate the scores of your most recent TEFOL/IELTS assessment plus
the sub score in writing.
_____

7. How long have you been writing in English? _____

Section B

Now I would like to ask some questions to understand your EAP writing situation

more precisely. Please give as many details as you can.

1. What kind of writing can be considered as academic writing? Please provide

some specific examples.

2. What are the differences between academic writing and non-academic writing?

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Appendix 6   **Main study: Informed Consent Form**

Project: Metaphorical Conceptualisation to Construct and Develop EFL Students' Writing

Principal Investigator: Wan Wan

Supervisors: Dr. Graham Low and Prof. Frank Hardman

You are invited to participate in a series of EAP writing workshops as part of my doctoral research project. This sheet contains a brief overview of what the workshop will mainly involve and what you will be asked to do in order to help you make an informed decision whether to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of my research project is to provide a thick description of EFL students' understanding of academic writing, particularly with respect to the required writing assignments/essays they will faced with, during a yearlong MA programme, via an analysis of metaphors they create in the 'X is Y' format (e.g., "academic writing is…because…").

The fundamental goals of the nine-session workshops are (a) to practice critical reading/thinking skills that you needed for MA assignments and dissertations, (b) to collect your metaphorical conceptualisations of academic writing and (c) to share and discuss your academic writing experiences via metaphorical conceptualisation.

Each session will last roughly 1.5-2 hours, involving instructors' demonstration, individual/group work and a little homework afterwards. The workshops will include a focus on rhetorical conventions of academic writing and you will have opportunities to explore your writing processes, which should be useful for you, when identifying weak points or gaps in your writing skills. Also,

you will be adding to a body of knowledge about metaphor and an application of cognitive function of metaphor for education.

I will ask your participation in the following activities: providing your metaphors of writing, joining in group discussions about individuals' personal metaphors of writing and allowing me to interview you individually for a period of half hour to an hour after each workshop.

I will record your responses in the interviews in field notes and on tape. You will have the chance to see all the information I gather and you can change any of it which is not accurate. In my thesis, your names will be disguised to preserve your privacy. I will also be happy to provide you with a finished copy of my study if you so request.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time. If you withdraw before the end of the project, a short exit interview will be conducted by a staff member. Upon your request, all information will be destroyed and there will be no repercussions. Your answers would not adversely affect your relationship with the staff or me in the Department of Education. You would not get any extra mark in your assessed coursework essay assignments for participation in the study.

If you choose to participate, all information pertaining to you will be kept in a locked file. Only my supervisors, Dr. Graham Low, Prof. Frank Hardman, two Chinese PhD students from the Department of Education who will help me check the transcripts and translations of the data, and I will have access to your data. The data from the study may be published in journals or meetings; however, in no instances will information pertaining to your personal profile be made open to the public or be viewable by them. Please keep that in mind as you participate.

If you are willing to participate in this project, please sign the statement

attachment and return it to me. Take the extra unsigned copy for your own records.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM

I have fully read and understand the information presented in the form and that I agree to participate voluntarily in the project. I realise that my participation as a respondent in the study is confidential and that I can withdraw my intention at any given time at my behest. I will keep a copy of this Informed Consent Form for my personal safekeeping.

Printed Name:

Signature:

E-mail:

Phone number or location where you can be reached

Best times to reach you

Date:

Appendix 7   **Interview1: Question Guide**

Q1. Could you talk about your understanding of metaphor?

Q2. Do you have any problems or difficulties in thinking of a metaphor? If so, could you explain the problem (s)?

Q3. Could you talk about why you choose the metaphor(s) to describe your writing?

Appendix 8   **Interview 2 Question Guide**

Q1. Could you briefly talk about the objectives of the two metaphor-related sessions?

Q2. Tell me about the main contents of the first session:

(Probes: How do you organise the class? What is the purpose of the in-class activity? What do you expect students to do?)

Q3. Tell me about the main contents of the second session:

(Probes: How do you prepare for the class? What are the purposes of designing the in-class activities? What do you expect students to do?)

Appendix 9   **Interview 3 Question Guide**

Q1: Tell me about your understandings of metaphor after the two lectures?

Q2. Are there any impact, do you think, the two sessions have had on your metaphors of writing?

Appendix 10   **Interview 5: Question Guide**

Q1. Could you tell me whether and how far the metaphor-based teaching sessions have helped you understand the concept of metaphor?

Examples of probes created during the interview:

    1.1. Could you tell me your conception of metaphor at the moment?

    1.2 Could you briefly talk about the constitutive element of metaphor?

    1.3 Could you talk about your understanding of conceptual metaphor?

    1.4 How do you understand metaphor systematicity, which involved highlighting and hiding some aspects of concepts?

Q2: Could you tell me whether and how far the metaphor-based teaching sessions have helped you cope with the elicitation metaphor task?

Appendix 11   **Interview 6: Question Guide**

Q1. How do you feel about the first group discussion?

Q2. Are there any impact, do you think, the group discussion has had on your metaphors of writing?

Appendix 12   **Interviews 7 & 8: Question Guide**

Q1. Could you talk about why you choose the metaphor(s) to describe your writing?

Q2. Could you talk about whether your metaphors of writing and any related aspect of your writing have changed? If so, could you offer an explanation?

Appendix 13   **A Sample of My Field Notes**

(The first metaphor-based group discussion in week 10 of Term 1)

1. All participants agreed that sharing personal metaphors built rapport between them (e.g., Sam said "I was no longer alone in my views of writing, once I realised that other people experienced the same sense of suffering from blocking during writing).

2. Sam

She was worried about the results of her assignments, could not focus on her writing (Action: interview her for detail).

2. Zara

She really liked Lucy's "writing is like a tour" metaphor

Her explanation: Lucy's metaphor made me feel the difference in writing with and without the reader's perspectives, which, I think could be really helpful when refining and tightening up the argument at the revising stage. From a reader's perspective, he or she may feel something is unclear which, however, the writer had thought was adequate. I will read my essay as a reader and hopefully I can find the gaps/logical errors in the argument.

(Action: interview her on whether and in what ways she used the reader's perspective in her writing)

4. Joyce, Sam, Tess and Zara

They liked Lucy's "writing is like warming up in jogging" and/or Tina's "writing

is like making a jigsaw puzzle" metaphors.

(Action: Interview them and ask whether and how they employ the metaphors in their writing)

5. **Lucy, Wendy and Joyce**

They reacted positively to Tess's "writing is a cooking" metaphor that highlighted making reference to previous students' essays.

Appendix 14   **A Schedule of Observation**

Student	Personal metaphors of writing	Attitudes to other people's metaphors	Making adjustments to personal metaphors	Identifying writing problems'	Formulating plans of actions to change writing	Generating new views of writing

Appendix 15   Lecture Handouts (session 1)

International Perspectives on Language Education
The role of metaphor in language and language education

Claim

Metaphor is central to many important differences between languages, cultures, and ideas about teaching/learning. However, there is also much that seems similar.

Aims

In this session we will look briefly at 3 questions:

1. What is metaphor?
2. How does it differ between languages/cultures?
3. Why teach it on language courses?

PART A. ELEVEN BASIC QUESTIONS (FROM YOU) ABOUT METAPHOR

Q1. What is metaphor?

It is where *one thing* is treated as if it is *something else*.

1. 'The head (teacher) is a pig!'
2. As she said it, she felt a wave of anger sweep over her.
3. The students lapped up her every word;
4. They all felt the head was a slippery character, …
5. … who did shady deals.
6. When I teach people I marry them (from Oxford et al., 1998: 32)

Q2. I can't see two things, except in (1) the HEAD is a PIG, (2) a WAVE of ANGER & (6) I TEACH… I MARRY

True. And of these 3, only *the head is a pig* has an explicit *A IS B* formulation.
(2) & (6), however, could easily be reformulated as A is B (e.g. ANGER IS A WAVE)

What about the others?
Do we try and create A IS B formulations? If we do try, we will need to be a bit more abstract than ANGER IS A WAVE.

A DISHONEST PERSON IS HARD TO HOLD ONTO? (for *slippery*)
DISHONESTY IS DARKNESS? (for *shady*)

We then say *slippery* is metaphoric, but it is not itself a metaphor.
slippery thus has a literal sense and a different, metaphoric sense.
Conceptual metaphor theorists argue that a metaphor relates 2 *concepts*,
and that words simply make use of, or 'reflect' the metaphor.

BUT how reliable is my A IS B guess?
If I have several similar expressions, I could call guessing 'making a
generalisation'.

> So, '*I marry students*' and '*I seduce students*' could be given
> generalisations like TEACHING IS MAKING LOVE, or
> LEARNING IS SHARING.
> The more examples you have, the more accurate you generalization
> will be.

BUT Surely people do not go through this every time they say/read shady?
You often just *remember* that 'shady' means 'not totally honest'.
> You do not think about *how* 'honest' is being treated.
However, if a phrase is *not* conventional, you probably do have to *guess*
the meaning (if you are the listener).

Q3. But that would mean there is no single 'correct' generalisation?

Yes, that's right.
If we had 10 expressions (= more data), we might be able to be more
definite.

Moral
You need to *justify* and *evaluate* generalisations.
   Admit if your A IS B metaphor is just one of several possibles. **Be
honest**.
And you need to *hunt for extra evidence*.
(= As with any other research technique)

VERY QUICK QUESTION

 "He argued so forcefully that he *defeated* his *opponent*"
   What do *defeated* and *opponent* relate to:
   ARGUMENT IS WAR? CHESS? SPORT? A GAME? FIGHTING? A
COMPETITION?

Now do the Generalisation exercise

Q4. Do the two 'things' (A and B) have to be *very* different, like 'dishonesty' and 'darkness', or 'teachers' and 'pigs'?

Generally, yes. It's called '**incongruity'.**

THUS
'John is like his brother' would *not* be metaphoric – John and his brother

are too close. [Often said to be in the same *domain*: *people* and here, *family*]
AND
A big A ~ B difference helps if you want to be dramatic and remembered.

HOWEVER, LIFE IS MORE COMPLEX
Not all 'things' are *very* different. *He got hot under the collar* links heat and anger - they often go together in life (at least the perception of being hot).

Q5. So not all metaphors are comparisons, then?

No. A lot are, but not all.
So you can't *define* metaphor as a comparison.
NB. This remains controversial. Steen (2007) claims *all* metaphor relies on comparison (and thus involves similarity as well as difference).

Q6. All these examples are expressed in language. Is metaphor always language?

No.
a) It can be *conceptual* and underlie language.
> *She fumed* can be seen as a linguistic example (or 'exponent') of the *conceptual metaphor* ANGER IS FIRE.
> NB. Some people call 'fumed' a *linguistic metaphor*, rather than a 'metaphoric expression'.
> NB. Conceptual metaphor theorists like Lakoff argue that *all* metaphor is essentially conceptual.

b) It can be *behavioural*
> You can *act* as if LOVE IS WAR. And make your partner suffer physically or psychologically.

c) It can be *visual*;
> You could live in a red room, because RED IS HOT, or a white room because WHITE IS COOL.
> Or a cowardly character in a play could be given a yellow face.
> NB. You need quite a lot of clear evidence to be sure you have a visual metaphor: more than for verbal metaphor.

d) It could also be *musical*.
> NB. People often link different senses: e.g. a certain musical sound is blue. Linking senses is called 'synaesthesia'. There appears to be a neurological basis for some synaesthesia.

Q7. Your examples (1) – (6) don't all seem very imaginative?

No, they aren't.

Because huge areas of metaphor are *conventional*. You use them without thinking. They are part of everyday vocabulary and idioms and are often the only way you can talk about things.

eg. 'She spoke *at* him, rather than with him'; 'She just couldn't *get through to* him'; 'He loved her, but just couldn't *put it into* words'.

Many of these conventional metaphors derive from the human body, or basic human experience of (eg) eating, talking, working, using tools or going on journeys (i.e. the local, surrounding culture – though it may be culture from the past). As a result, some metaphor theorists talk of metaphor as 'embodied experience'.

Some relate to particular *inter*-cultural experiences. Trade or wars with neighbours create endless 'ethnic' metaphors: Europeans as ghosts (Chinese), Dutch courage (English), to become a Turk (Greek = angry).

Is there perhaps a difference between 'intentional' (or 'deliberate') metaphor in discourse and metaphoric words used without much metaphoric intent? Yes

EG. A IS B formulation tends to be deliberate (*The head is a pig!!*)
NB. Try and avoid the term 'conscious metaphor': it is frequently hard to show how far someone used a phrase consciously and what exactly they were conscious of.
EG. Hedges and tuning devices: BASE lecture egs

* Cameron ID exercise
* Hedging examples

Q8. So how do you know when something is conventional or innovative? It's hard.
But often a dictionary can help.
"He *defeated* his opponent; he just *wiped him out*"
Your dictionary may mention defeat in argument, but have wipe out as something purely physical (eg. from Steen, 2007).
BUT
It depends on the dictionary OALD (5th ed) does *not* give defeat in an argument.

Q9. The examples seem to be suggesting that metaphors can be quite highly structured?

Some metaphors are. Some analysts then talk about 'mental models'
E.g. 1   Conduit metaphor of language/communication.
E.g. 2   Argument as a journey or a structure/building
E.g. 3   Anger as liquid in container vs 'container/object in liquid.

NOTE RE ANGER
Before we had ANGER IS A WAVE. Now we have the more abstract

ANGER IS A LIQUID. We can argue that liquids when moving form waves, so we can then have a wave of anger. This is a neater account of anger. Note that we could have an even more abstract metaphor (for English) underlying ANGER IS A LIQUID: EMOTIONS ARE LIQUIDS.

These models (a) tend to be partial and (b) vary in detail from culture to culture

eg ANGRY PERSON IS WILD ANIMAL > ANGER IS ANGRY ANIMAL INSIDE YOU > ANGER IS AN ANGRY ANIMAL OUTSIDE YOU.

PASSION AS INTERNAL BEAST is a general European metaphor (K övecses, 1986: 23). The civilized person tries to keep the animal inside and under control. Serious anger = the beast escapes.

Thus English and Greek share:
to growl or snarl at someone
to have a fierce or ferocious temper
to unleash one's anger on someone
anger can *get out of hand*

But only English has the beast biting and eating the listener:
don't jump down my throat
She bit his head off (data: Ekaterini Constantinou)

Interestingly, Deignan (2005) finds more gaps in conventional metaphoric models than in analogies created by (eg) writers or scientists.

A community's shared associations may be relevant too: Why don't we use stone in English to describe unintelligence, as we *do* use density (*thick*) and we *do* use wood (*thick as a plank*) and earth (*clod*)?

Allan (2003) suggests it may be because stone already carries ideas of (1) steadiness and constancy (*she was a rock*; *you are a real brick*) and (2) cruelty and indifference (*he was stony hearted*).

* *L1-L2 exercises (Chinese Courage)(Thai heads and bottoms)*

Q10. So, is metaphor the same as analogy, then?

Hard to say.
An analogy is always a comparison or similarity (*An atom is like a planetary system*)

It is usually overt ("Think of a planetary system. It's a bit like that"); you generally do not have to guess IF there is an analogy, or what it is.

X is usually 'like' Y, and not treated *as* Y. The 2 are not confused.

The interest is usually purely the functional aspects (orbits, rather than: 'bits of asteroid', 'whirling gas', 'red', 'large' or 'exciting'). No 'overtones'.

The purpose is almost always to explain something clearly, not to hide things.
So, some metaphors are analogies and some analogies are metaphors!!!!

NOTE. To Steen (2007 and elsewhere), *all* metaphors are ultimately comparisons and *all* can be seen as analogies.

* *Scaffolding exercise*

Q11. Does metaphor work alone?

No.
You can often be IRONIC, or EMPHATIC at the same time. You can also use metonymy (= a close association, or part for whole).

An example of metonymy: 'Washington declared war on Iraq'.
'Washington' (Place) stands for the President/his staff.

"We need some new blood!"	BLOOD stands for PERSON (metonymy)
= people with new ideas	*but we don't just need any sort of people* BLOOD symbolises LIFE (metonymy) LIFE is a sort of ENERGY energy/force (metonymy) BLOOD is IDEAS, CREATIVITY (metaphor)
'He got hot under the collar'	also involves metonymy: a close association of anger and feeling of heat.
	Grady calls these small associations 'primary metaphors'. They are really metonymies. The claim is that most primary metaphors are the same across cultures – but work is starting to emerge that they can vary.

NOTE . There are sometimes alternative possible analyses: metaphor or metonymy.

PART B. SIX REASONS WHY EDUCATIONALISTS SHOULD BE INTERESTED IN METAPHOR

1. **Metaphors are a basic part of language** – in **discourse**, in **vocabulary** and some say in **grammar**. So language teachers need to teach learners to control/use metaphor.

2. **Metaphors in vocabulary are often structured** and preserve the connections in the original (e.g. liquids expanding in containers and containers exploding). 'Models' of (e.g.) argument as warfare, or love as warfare are contained in language. Teachers can teach this structure, but they do need to think about (a) how far these models genuinely reflect current L2 'culture' and (b) how their *own* use of language will reflect their views (e.g. do they portray inappropriate ideas about language, or learning, via the language they employ when talking to learners?).

3. There is evidence starting to build up that metaphoric structuring of vocabulary helps **learners remember better** (Boers, 2000; Littlemore & Low, 2006)

   * Boers handout

4. **Cultural models and stereotypes are the cause (direct or indirect) of a lot of misery** in the world - sexist, racist, elitist, gang behaviour and persecution. Social scientists, personal development teachers and counsellors can usefully discuss them with their students (eg. ARGUMENT IS WAR, LOVE IS WAR) and think up better ones! This can be part of Language awareness in an L2 programme.

5. **People often explain things by using analogies** - especially things that are abstract, or hard to see, touch or feel. Textbooks are full of analogies (the atom is a planetary system; the brain is a computer; religious life is a journey) So teachers need to teach the 'accepted' metaphors.
   AND they need to hunt for short-term metaphors that their students will understand.
       Students may need to *unlearn* them for exams!

   * RL electrons example

6. **Looking for metaphors makes you more critical.** There is some evidence from small scale studies that training students to think about underlying metaphors helps them read more critically (Littlemore, 2004).

Appendix 16

Metaphor: Generalising from Spoken/Written Language Data
(Concept from Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and Deignan (1995))

Anger is _____
A wave of anger rolled over him
The fury rose then fell

Ideas are _____
The roots of his theory lie in the 19th century
The ideas only came to fruition 50 years later
The seeds of his later theory were planted in his youth
The government worked overtime to plant the idea in people's minds
The company spent a fortune nurturing Smith's ideas
The idea was so deep-rooted that they could never get him to change it

Ideas are _____
I don't know. Give me an idea.
It was my idea, not hers.
These ideas have been passed down through the centuries.
The Europeans got the idea of zero from the Arabs.

WHAT IS WHAT? _____
Her eyes were full of emotion.
His look was filled with hate.
His gaze contained pure hatred
Her eyes displayed no emotion at all.
Her eyes were empty of any emotion whatsoever.

WHAT IS WHAT? _____
That was rather a cutting remark
She smiled and then plunged the knife in, went for the jugular, as it were
I was really hurt by her remarks
That was a harmful comment, if ever there was one.
She was cut to the quick by his words

WHAT is WHAT? _____
I haven't the foggiest idea what you mean
I'm a bit hazy about nuclear physics!
His mind was in a haze of confusion and wonder.
She had just a hazy idea of what he was asking her to do.
She said she her mind was a bit foggy
I was in a haze; I just couldn't think straight.

Appendix 17

Evaluating Conceptual Metaphors
Anger in English

Lakoff and Kövecses tried to adapt the 'Conduit' metaphor to some (though not all) of the ways we conceptualise ANGER. Here is a small section:

The model

ANGER = HEAT

THE BODY = A CONTAINER
                                                  Steam engine

ANGER = SUBSTANCE
|
                                                  Electric circuit
|

Anger increases
|

                                Elaborated to   Bomb

Fluid heats
|

                                                  Projectile
Fluid expands
                                                    |
                                                Volcano

Container explodes if lid stays on

Fluid escapes

  =   What is inside comes out

Your task
Can you match these examples with the various ideas / categories in the model?

1.   *She blew a fuse*
2.   *He blew a gasket!*
3.   *Don't lose your hair*
4.   *She just bottled it up inside her for week*
5.   *It makes my blood boil.*
6.   *She hit the roof when I told her!*
7.   *He had been simmering for weeks.*
8.   *Anger just welled up inside him.*
9.   *He almost burst a vessel.*
10.   *I tried to defuse the situation.*
11.   *He finally erupted.*
12.   *Her dad had kittens when she told him.*
13.   *I've had it up to here with you!*
14.   *She was really hot under the collar!*

Note   You can see how the language describes the body as 3 different types of container.

Appendix 18

Curious Metaphors in Education
Student teachers on teaching

Background

Cortazzi and Jin (1999) asked 140 student (primary) teachers in the UK to create metaphors (of the form TEACHING IS Y, BECAUSE Z), to describe teaching. 236 metaphors were generated. The range was inevitably broader than in spontaneous conversation. C&J also note that several metaphors betrayed "wry humour" and "mixed feelings about the complexity and difficulty of teaching."

Your task

Try and work out what the students said in the 'BECAUSE' column

The data

TEACHING IS FOOD / DRINK / COOKING   (22 occurrences)

TEACHING IS:	BECAUSE ....
making bread	
a coconut	
a chestnut	
a good meal	

TEACHING IS WAR   (6 occurrences)

TEACHING IS:	BECAUSE ....
war	
arming the troops	

TEACHING IS AN OCCUPATION (OTHER THAN TEACHING)   (16 occurrences)

TEACHING IS:	BECAUSE ....
a judge	
a priest	
a juggler	

Appendix 19   **An Example of a Student's Summary**

Appendix 20   Lecture Handouts (session 2)

Metaphors of writing

Introduction
Learners of all sorts of skills are often asked to create a metaphor (or better, to describe a metaphor they actually employ) as a means of showing how they conceptualise the activity. The hope is that doing this will *raise their own awareness* of the activity, but will also show up *any gaps or problems* that can be worked on by a teacher or the learners. We will work on writing.

A pedagogically appropriate metaphor of writing should do at least three things:

1. It should contain all the **stages** involved in the writing process.
2. It should be able to describe **problems** and not just successful writing.
3. It should indicate **ways to resolve** the problems.

A metaphor might be relatively *unsuccessful* because it lacks (1)-(3) above, but it could also be inappropriate because, like WRITING IS LIKE KILLING SOMEONE, it shows a highly undesirable way of treating writing (and the reader!).

Data/task
You will **compare three learner accounts** of writing by Chinese undergraduates.

My thanks to Wan Wan for permission to cite some data from her 2007 MA dissertation. I have simply corrected occasional spelling and grammar errors to aid readability.

31 Chinese English majors opted to take an extra 3-week 'trial writing programme' in China. On the course, metaphor was explained to them and they did a short mid-course conceptualisation exercise. At the end of the course they were asked to create a 200 word text, round the idea of 'Writing is (like) …', based on their memories of writing an essay two days before.

Follow up questions

Q1. Do any of the three metaphors make use of Chinese, but *not* English culture?
_____
_____

_____
_____

Q2. Two of the class said they couldn't use metaphoric language to express their thinking and would not hand in a text. Two others wrote a literal description of writing. What do you conclude from the viewpoint of research methods?

Passage 1

Writing is like driving. Before start driving, knowledge of traffic is needed in order to apply for driving licence. In conjunction with the knowledge of traffic, skill of driving must be learned. Just like writing, although writing is a skill which needs practice, conscious learning about rule of writing is necessary.

In a day, we might drive to many places, such as an office, a supermarket, a restaurant and a school. Therefore we need to plan a direction before going out. This step can be compared with the outline of writing. If we do not know the direction, exploring a map is needed, likewise, researching an area of writing in order to collect data. Then, we can drive to wherever we want. When getting lost, we need to consider a map and try to get back on track. This can happen in writing as well.

When we know more about roads or shortcuts, we may change the direction of driving to the same destination in order to save time and fuel. This is just like revising and editing a draft before finalising it. Asking other people to check if we are on the wrong track can be considered as proof-reading.

Passage 2

Writing is a process of weaving with various thoughts from other people. It could be fun if the final products could be your imagination perfectly. In order to realise this, no step is less nor more important than the previous or the later: they are cohesive continuum. Firstly, you need to have a general sketch of your waving: deciding which color thread you want to use, which design you want to choose and what products you want to weave. For writing, you should find out the topic [which] interest[s] you, the writing style of expressi[ng] your idea and how long it will be.

Then, getting some inspiration from others' weaving works, (…) change your original sketch as appropriate. This process is decisive for the final products. Since having got enough idea[s] and inspiration, it is time to start weaving: weaving all the information together following an [agreed] design. This may not be the perfect form at first, [but] it can be changed to a certain extent; or even worse, you have to come back to the beginning. This process may be frustrating

and struggling, but you should not feel frustrated. Keep your work on and find all that you need to solve the difficulty. Then, your handweaving has almost finished [and you are ready for] the last editing: checking the spelling, punctuation and grammatical mistakes. Sometimes you are so familiar with your work that you are blind to the subtle mistakes in your weaving, and then you need other people's help. Finally, your weaving work can be shown to the public.

Passage 3

The essay writing process for me is like "Oil painting". For example, when I paint a picture of apples, firstly I put apples on the table and look at them from different angles to grasp their shape, colour and so on. Similarly, I read various literatures to find suitable notions or expressions to my essay topic. And in the next stage, I may decide the position to draw apples on canvas. This is like deciding the outline in essay writing. After deciding the position, I start [a] rough sketch in charcoal. Charcoal is erasable and this is like writing a draft of the essay. And I start painting [the] same as starting writing the essay. To repaint I have to dry the canvas for a while as well, to read and change it later objectively. And then, I repaint it like rewriting the essay. After these processes, I exhibit my painting similarly to having my essay read by someone else.

Wan, W. (2007). *An examination of metaphorical accounts L2 writers tell about their writing processes*. University of York, unpublished MA TESOL dissertation.

Appendix 21   **Two Samples of Interview Transcripts**

Sample 1 (An interview with Tina in week 2, Term 2)

Wan: Could you talk about why you choose the metaphor(s) to describe your writing?

Tina: I chose the "speech" metaphor, because I felt that an essential purpose of writing was to convince your readers and make your arguments stand out. To do this, the writer must provide sufficient sourced evidence and showed the connections between the evidence and the writer's claim.

Wan: Could you talk about whether your metaphors of writing and any related aspect of your writing have changed? If so, could you offer an explanation?

Tina: Lucy's "tour" metaphor really impressed me. It made me pay attention to the reader's perspective in revising the argument. Writing is silent talk, but does not lack emotion or argument. In addition, I also feel that the function of in-text referencing is not limited to avoiding plagiarism. The use of in-text referencing for example, including the references in brackets, could lend weight to the argument, because the references can function as supporting evidence, showing that the points I am trying to make have been tested out by other people.

Sample 2 (An interview with Wendy in week 2, Term 2)

Wan: Could you talk about why you choose the "judging a live baking competition", metaphor to describe your writing?

Wendy: The metaphor was selected because, firstly, the judge must have the so-called 'reader's perspective', and secondly, the judge should be confident about his/her evaluation.

Wan: Could you explain, as a judge or writer, how would you effectively express

your opinions?

Wendy: The tone is very important. You need to act as a robot with no emotion-related bias. You cannot be aggressive or emotive, even though you really like or hate someone's work. If you think someone has done a great job, or in the context of writing, you strongly advocate someone's statements, you should provide evidence and show people how you reach the conclusion.

Wan: Do you think you are a robot, when writing the two assignments?

Wendy: Not really. I feel my language is a bit emotive. I should not have attacked a person to show my disagreement.

Wan: Could you talk about whether your metaphors of writing and any related aspect of your writing have changed? If so, could you offer an explanation?

Wendy: Firstly, I think Lucy's "tour" metaphor is really interesting, because it highlights the reader's perspective and helps me in spotting the absence of coherence in my writing. Also, I feel it is unrealistic to wait for the Eureka moment, especially when writing a timed assignment. It is too late to start writing after you have found sufficient evidence.

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