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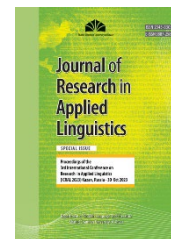
An Experimental Study on Teaching English Metaphors in Higher Education

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Abstract

This article explores the potential opportunities for the practical use of metaphors in the educational process on the one hand and the impact of their use on the formation, development, and enrichment of pedagogical thought on the other. This study aims to develop and experimentally test a pedagogical discourse-based model for the use of metaphors in teaching English in higher education. During a practical experiment, the essential and content characteristics of the "metaphor" phenomenon in domestic and foreign English language textbooks were identified, and their frequency of use in the teaching of English in higher education was demonstrated. Per pedagogical discourse, a model for the use of metaphors in teaching English in higher education, including applied, methodological, organizational, criterion-based, and resultant components, was developed and scientifically supported. Furthermore, an original and comprehensive approach to the development of the criteria component of the use of metaphors in teaching English in higher education was also proposed. Possible criteria include methodological competence, sociocultural competence, communicative competence, and language proficiency. During the experiment's control phase, we observed significant changes in the level of competency formation among the experimental group's students. The reliability of the research results is ensured by a thorough analysis of the scientific literature on the research problem, a variety of research methods and their conformance with the research objectives, and the correct processing of the research results.

Keywords: Student Engagement; English Metaphors; Methodological Competence; Sociocultural Competence; Communicative Competence.

1. Introduction

At the current stage of development, linguists are very interested in the diversity of speech (Deputatova, 2019). Metaphors improve our language and demonstrate a high level of proficiency. When we study metaphors in a foreign language, we first become acquainted with the mentality and cultural and linguistic characteristics of another nation. Consequently, the study of metaphor in English also aims at understanding the culture of the English-speaking world. Metaphors are valuable in both an aesthetic context and when communicating a thought. A metaphor is regarded as the main and most expressive mode of speech, which is primarily found in literary texts. In the course of experimental activities, we developed a pedagogical discourse-based model for teaching English in higher education. The experimental work comprised three stages, outlined below.

The first stage was an analysis of research in the field of teaching English by employing a metaphor, theory, and methodology, followed by examining the practical application of metaphor in teaching English to higher education students and, subsequently, the development of a research concept and selection of an experimental base for the study. The second stage was the development and testing of a model for using metaphor in teaching English in higher education based on pedagogical discourse, with the results of introducing the model into the educational process obtained during the determining and forming stages of the experiment. The third stage entailed concluding the experimental work. In this study, two universities served as the basis for the experiment. An experimental group (hereafter referred to as the EG) and a control group participated in the experiment (hereafter referred to as the CG). Third-year students

studying "Theory and Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages and Cultures" participated in the experiment, where the experimental group comprised 25 individuals (KFU students).

2. Literature Review

The methodological competence criterion encompasses the possession of various teaching methods, knowledge of didactic methods and techniques, and the ability to implement them in the learning process, as well as knowledge of the psychological mechanisms of learning material in the learning process. Kuzmina highlights special competence in the field of the discipline being taught, methodological competence in the field of methods of forming knowledge, skills, and abilities, psychological and pedagogical competence, and reflection of pedagogical activity or autopsychological competence as the most important characteristics of teaching staff. In general, the methodological training of a teacher is the process and outcome of mastering the system of methodological knowledge, skills, and abilities and readiness to implement them in professional activities (Kuzmina, 2002, p.12).

The first step in this direction is the development of the topic "Cross-Cultural Communication," through which students acquire the skills and abilities necessary to avoid or escape unpleasant situations associated with ignorance of cultural traditions in the communication process. The formation of sociocultural competence, which is defined as "a set of knowledge about values, beliefs, behavioral patterns, customs, traditions, language, cultural achievements inherent to a particular society and characterizing it" as well as "the ability and readiness of an individual to carry out adequate intercultural communication" (Ishkhanyan, 2016, p.10), occurs in the processes of sociocultural education (initiation of the individual to the culture and folk traditions of the country of the language being studied) and training in the complex development of all components of foreign language communicative competence.

Communicative competence refers to the learner's ability to communicate effectively through the use of language. Kanale and Swain defined it as proficiency in four areas: words and rules, relevance, consistency, and the application of communication strategies (Canale & Swain, 1980, p.18). For more effective professional work and foreign language learning, students of all levels in the "Linguistics" concentration must demonstrate methodological, sociocultural, and communicative competencies, as well as a high level of language proficiency. In translation, the ongoing processes of knowledge integration and interaction between diverse cultures and cultural traditions impose on the translator the role of cultural ambassador, facilitating cross-cultural communication through mutual understanding (Sabirova, 2019, p.101).

3. Methodology

The systemic approach (Sadovsky, 1970; Kraevsky, 2009), communicative approach (Bim, 1988; Leontiev, 1971; Skalkin, 1983; Habermas, 2006), and the concept of dialogue of cultures serve as the research's methodological foundation. M.M. Bakhtin and B.C. Bibler, the problem-activity approach (Vygotsky, 2002; Leontiev, 1994; Lomov, 1999; Rubinstein, 1997), the polysubjective approach (Bakhtin, 2012; Zimnyaya, 2000; Kan-Kalik, 1987), the theory of training and education (Slasteninet al., 2002; Ushinsky, 2002; Skatkin, 1986 (Black, 1962; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Richards, 1960; Arutyunova, 1990; Telia, 1988). In order to accomplish the objective of the study, a range of research methodologies were employed. Theoretical methods were utilized, including the analysis of scholarly literature in the fields of pedagogy, philology, linguistics, and linguistics pertaining to the research problem, as well as modeling. Empirical methods were also used, such as experimentation, observation, surveys, testing, questioning, graphical representation of data, and the application of nonparametric statistical tests, specifically the T-Wilcoxon test.

3.1. Research Hypothesis

Research hypothesis: The process of teaching English using metaphors will be effective if the following conditions are met:

- Reliance on the essential and content characteristics of the concept of "metaphor" in domestic and foreign studies

- Consideration of the level of its theoretical justification and practical application in teaching aids in the English language

- Implementation of the process of teaching English to students of higher education using metaphors based on pedagogical discourse; and - intrusion of metaphors into the classroom.

4. Results

Each criterion, including methodological competence, sociocultural competence, communicative competence, and language knowledge quality criterion, was measured using a three-level system: High level: 9 to 10 points; average level: 6 to 8 points; low level: 1 to 5 points. We assessed the level of methodological competence utilizing a survey on the assimilation of theoretical and practical knowledge about metaphor and observed the development of skills and abilities in the use of metaphor in English instruction. Thus, 68% of EG students had a low formation of methodological value, 32% had an average formation of methodological value, and none of the students had a high formation of methodological value. A similar trend was observed in CG.
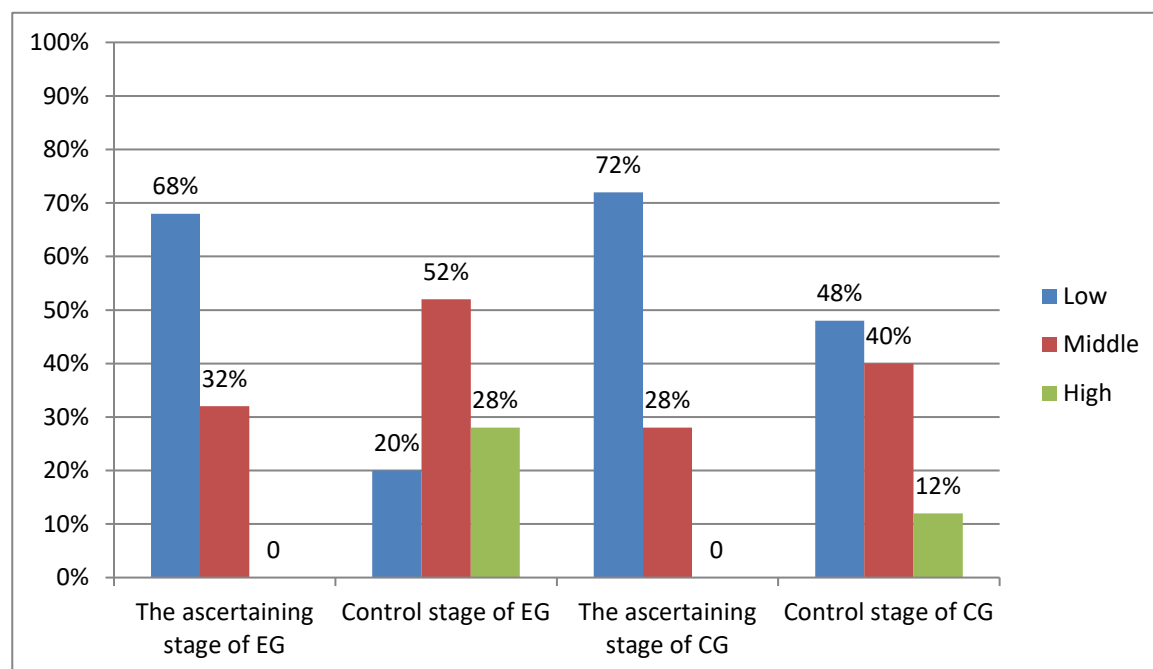

Figure 1. Dynamics of changes in the formation level of methodological competence in the EG and CG of students at the ascertaining and control stages

The level of communicative competence formation was assessed. Thus, 12% of students in the EG and 8% of students in the CG demonstrated a high level of competence development. 44% of students from the EG and 44% of students from the CG had an average proficiency level; 44% of students from the EG and 48% of students from the CG exhibited a low level.

4.1. Formative Stage

The number of students with a high formation of methodological competence increased by 12%, while the number with a low formation of methodological competence decreased by 14%. There were minor changes observed in the CG.
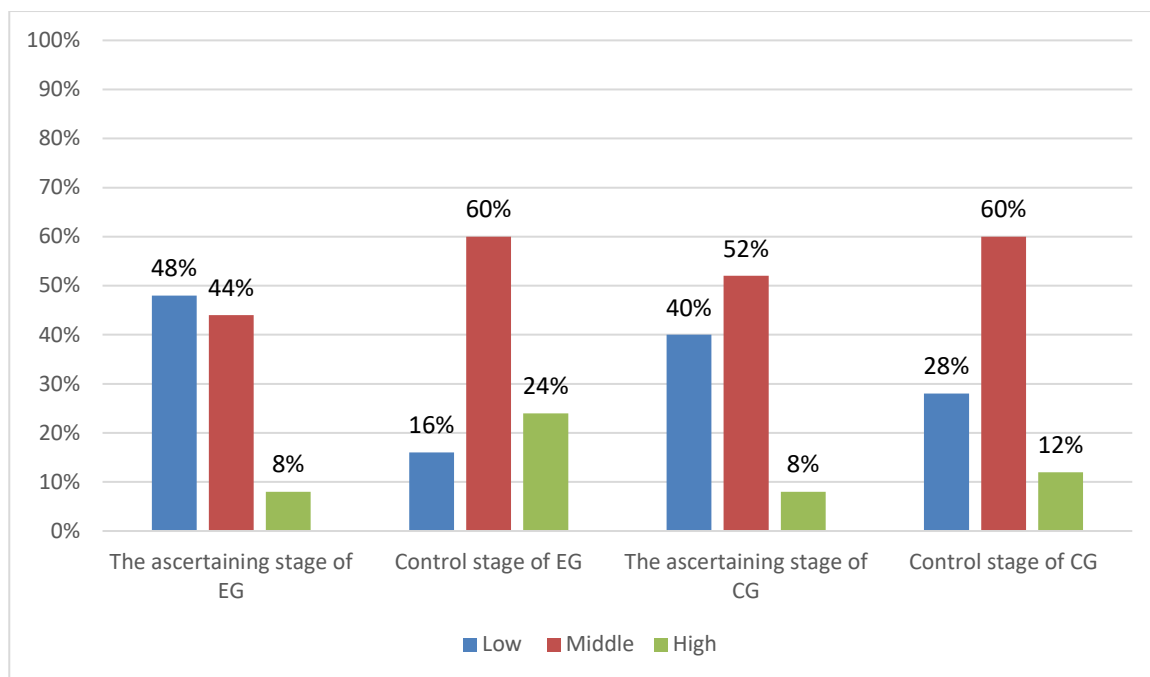
Figure 2. Dynamics of changes in the formation level of sociocultural competence in the EG and CG of students at the ascertaining and control stages

Next, the level of sociocultural competence formation was evaluated. The number of students with a high level of sociocultural competence increased by 16% of students from the EG and 8% of students from the CG, and the number of students with an average level increased by 52% of students from the EG and 52% of students from the CG; the number of students with a low level decreased by 32%. There were minor modifications to the CG. Next, the level of communicative competence formation was assessed.
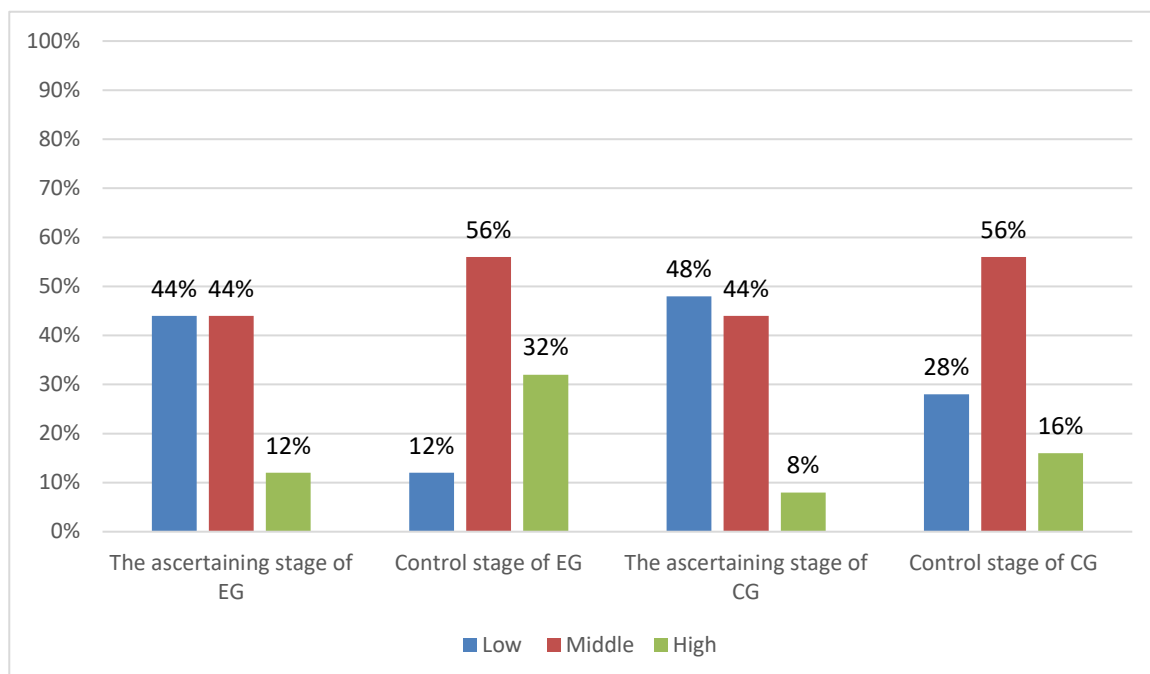

Figure 3. Dynamics of changes in formation level of communicative competence in the EG and CG of students at the ascertaining and control stages

The level of quality of language knowledge was subsequently assessed. The results indicated that 28% of EG students and 24% of CG students had a high level of knowledge quality, 60% of EG students and 40% of CG students had an average level, and 12% of EG students and 36% of CG students had a low level.

4.2. Control Stage

We completed the final diagnostics for all diagnosed indicators at the experiment's control stage. We measured the level of methodological competence at the control stage with a survey on the assimilation of theoretical and practical knowledge about metaphor, and we observed how skills and abilities in using metaphors in English teaching developed after we implemented the experimental model. The findings revealed that 20% of EG students had a low level of methodological value formation, while 52% had an average level.
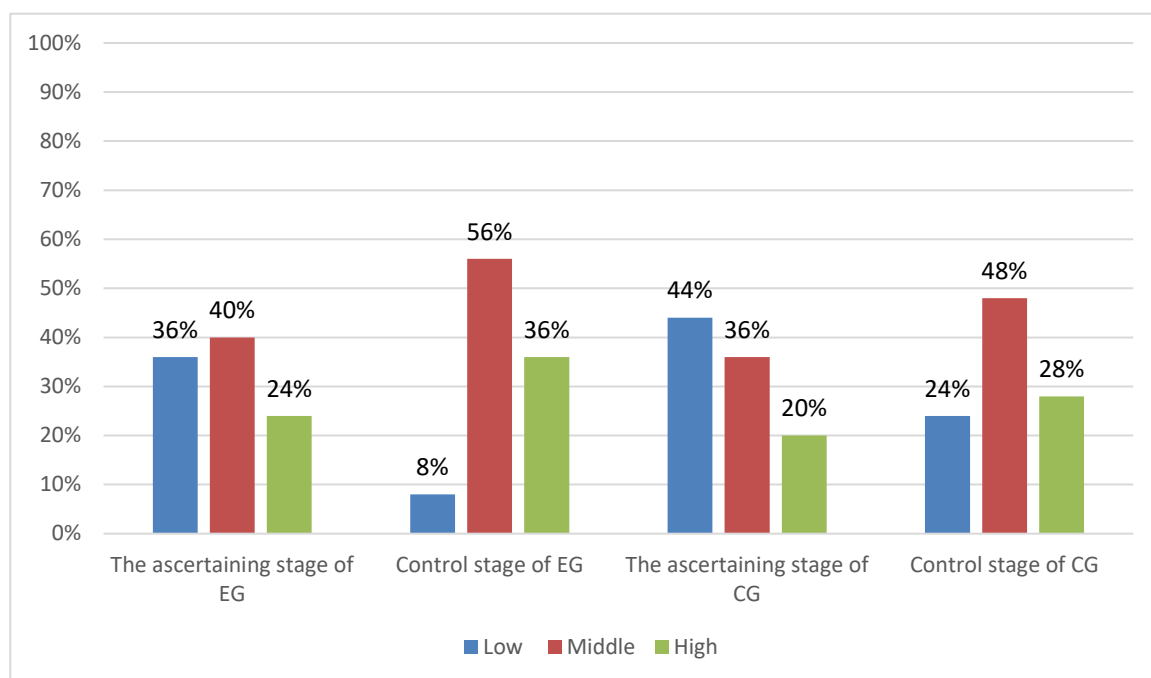

Figure 4. Dynamics of change in formation level of the criterion of the quality of language knowledge in the EG and CG of students at the ascertaining and control stages

The results of the study indicated that a significant proportion of students in the experimental group (EG), specifically 20%, exhibited a low degree of methodological value formation. Additionally, the majority of EG students, accounting for 52% of the sample, demonstrated an average level of methodological value formation. The student's level of knowledge experienced a significant increase of 28%. Next, the level of language proficiency was evaluated. The findings revealed that 36% of the EG students and 28% of the CG students possessed a high level of knowledge quality, 56% of the EG students and 48% of the CG students possessed a moderate level, and 8% of the EG students and 24% of the CG students possessed a low level.

5. Discussion

Figures 1-4 illustrate a discernible positive trend across all assessed indicators during the three stages of the experiment, namely ascertaining, forming, and controlling. Additionally, it is evident that the alterations in the CG are negligible in comparison to the modifications observed in the EG. Notably, during the assessment phase, the students enrolled in the Kazan Federal University's Higher School of Foreign Languages and Translation Studies demonstrated a higher level of proficiency in methodological, sociocultural, and communicative competence, as well as a superior command of the language, in comparison to their counterparts from another university. In conclusion, the analysis reveals the dynamics of knowledge acquisition among students, highlighting the notable enhancement in the level of competency development during the control stage, characterized by increased depth and quality. Our study's hypothesis was confirmed. It is also important to note that students in the "Linguistics" direction at all levels must demonstrate methodological, sociocultural, and communicative competencies, as well as high-quality language skills for more effective professional work and foreign language acquisition. The pilot study analysis demonstrated the efficacy of the metaphor-based pedagogical discourse-based model for teaching English in higher education that we developed. A foreign language becomes an important and essential component of both training systems and a prerequisite for future success in scientific professional activity (Kondrateva & Nazarova, 2015, p.204).

6. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, we can conclude that the model is an ideal technique that allows for the investigation of a process or phenomenon, has the capacity to cultivate scientific knowledge and personality, and is incorporated into the modern system of foreign language education. The pedagogical model is the relationship between the essential and supplementary elements of an educational program. The main components of any educational process are the system of educational outcomes, the feedback and evaluation system, the teaching strategies, and the assignments. Modeling, on the other hand, is a technique for simulating and analyzing a specific slice of reality (an object, phenomenon, process, situation, or phenomenon) or for managing it based on the representation of an object using a model. In turn, pedagogical modeling is a component of the creation of new, effective, and high-quality means of equipping a teacher and a student with the necessary tools for studying and conducting research in didactic, scientific, and methodological work, contributing to the expansion of cognitive possibilities and supplementing the formed knowledge and competencies in the model of contemporary education.

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Author Contributions

The authors contributed equally to the writing of the article.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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