WHAT'S IN A NAME? THE QUEST FOR NEW METAPHORS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

O QUE HÁ EM UM NOME? A BUSCA POR NOVAS METÁFORAS PARA A AQUISIÇÃO DE SEGUNDA LÍNGUA

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ABSTRACT

The present article focuses on a series of metaphors found in texts on language and language learning, and discusses the criticisms of the acquisition metaphor and the addition of participation as a new concept to represent language learning. The main theoretical proposals for second language acquisition (SLA) have been selected in order to verify which theories use acquisition and which use participation. While scrutinizing those texts, I found that other metaphors have also been proposed; however, acquisition and participation are still the most prevalent. Participation has been used as a metaphor since Sfard (1998) and has been well accepted in Applied Linguistics. Therefore, I present the cognitive view of metaphor and metonymy and demonstrate that, according to the cognitive studies on metaphor, participation cannot be seen as a metaphor, but rather as a metonym. To prove this, I use the metonymic model proposed by Lakoff (1990) as support. I conclude, agreeing with Ortega (2009) that a metaphorical polyphony can help us understand the complex phenomenon of language and language learning. Nevertheless, metonyms must not be disregarded.
Keywords: second language acquisition; participation metaphor; metaphor, metonym.

RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta uma série de metáforas encontradas em textos que falam sobre linguagem e aprendizagem de línguas e discuto as críticas à metáfora da aquisição e a adição de participação como um novo conceito para representar a aprendizagem de línguas. Foram selecionadas as principais propostas teóricas para a aquisição de segunda língua para verificar quais teorias usam aquisição e quais usam participação. Ao examinar esses textos, foi possível observar que outras metáforas também têm sido propostas, mas que aquisição e participação ainda são as predominantes. Participação tem sido usada como uma metáfora desde Sfard (1998) e foi bem aceita na Linguística Aplicada. Em seguida, apresento a visão cognitiva da metáfora e da metonímia e demonstro que, de acordo com os estudos cognitivos sobre a metáfora, participação não pode ser vista como metáfora, mas como uma metonímia. Para provar isso, uso como suporte o modelo proposto para a metonímia por Lakoff (1990). Concluo, concordando com Ortega (2009) que uma polifonia metafórica pode nos ajudar a compreender o fenômeno complexo da linguagem e da aprendizagem de línguas, mas que metonímias não devem ser desconsideradas.
Palavras-chave: aquisição de segunda língua; a metáfora da participação; metáfora, metonímia.

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"What's in a name?" says Juliet to Romeo, trying to convince him to abandon his family name - Montague – because a name is simply a meaningless convention. Juliet wants Romeo to deny his father, her family's enemy, and become only her lover. As a counterpart she would "no longer be a Capulet". Romeo accepts and says: "Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized". But does he lose his identity by changing his name and "acquiring" a new identity? Can we use the same reasoning to abandon the acquisition metaphor? Does baptizing a concept with a new name change its essence? What are the metaphors for language, and learning?

1. METAPHORS FOR LANGUAGE

The cognitive approach to metaphor has definitively buried the idea of metaphor as an ornament of language. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have proven that we live by metaphors and that they are present in our thoughts as well as in ordinary, scientific, or literary language. Since then, metaphor has been seen as a conceptual tool for our thoughts and communication.

As acknowledged by Meskill (2003, p, 27): "in research of all traditions, metaphor is used as a conceptual tool to make concrete, and make sense of, complex phenomena." Language is one of those complex phenomena, which have been explained by means of different metaphors.

Reddy (1993[1]) was the first to discuss the means through which language is metaphorically conceptualized. He views language as an objectified entity. In his work on the conduit metaphor, Reddy explains that we talk about communication by means of a metaphorical model for communication. He claims that "[T]his model of communication objectifies meaning in a misleading and dehumanizing fashion. It influences us to talk and think thoughts as if they had the same kind of external, intersubjective lamps and tables" (p.186).

According to Reddy (1993, p.189), "human language functions like a conduit enabling the transfer of repertoire members from one individual to another." In this view, ideas and thoughts are objects that are put into words (containers) and sent to one or more interlocutors through language, the conduit.

The conduit metaphor was present in Aristotle (Poetics, part XXV), when he says: "The vehicle of expression is language,—either current terms or, it may be, rare words or metaphors." For Aristotle, language is a vehicle, a conduit, a transport, or

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1 First published in 1979.

a means of expression. Saussure and Chomsky, on the other hand, use the faculty metaphor.

Saussure and Chomsky see language as part of the human body, as a biological faculty, as well as a system made up of structures. For Saussure (1966, p.9), language (langue) "is both a social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty." For Chomsky[2] (2002), there is a language organ, a component of the human brain

"that is responsible for these unique and indeed wondrous achievements" (p.47), "part of the human biological endowment" (p.85). System is also a metaphor which appears repeatedly in their reflections on language. Although the idea of structure can be found in Saussure, there is no occurrence of that metaphor per se. However, it is recursively employed by Chomsky.

As the editors of Chomsky (2002, p.1) remind us: "The idea of focusing on the Language Faculty was not new; it had its roots in the classical rationalist perspective of studying language as a "mirror of the mind," as a domain offering a privileged access to the study of human cognition". In fact, Plato, in *Theaetetus*, discusses his theory of innate ideas through his character Socrates, who says:

> Yes, my boy, for no one can suppose that in each of us, as in a sort of Trojan horse, there are perched a number of unconnected senses, which do not all meet in some one nature, the mind, or whatever we please to call it, of which they are the instruments, and with which through them we perceive objects of sense.

In this excerpt, the mind is also seen as a container (the Trojan horse) and concepts as instruments. On the same track, Aristotle (*On the soul*, part 5) defends that "what knowledge apprehends is universal, and these are in a sense within the soul". The soul stands for the mind and is also conceptualized as a container.

The modern rationalist Descartes also believed that human being have innate ideas. He states that, among the ideas, "some appear to me to be innate, some adventitious, and others to be formed [or invented] by myself; for, as I have the power of understanding what is called a thing, or a truth, or a thought, it appears to me that I hold this power from no other source than my own nature" (DESCARTES, 2007, p.15). For the illuminist Humboldt (1999), language is also produced by inner mental powers.

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2 I chose these specific excerpts from Chomsky (2002) but the same metaphors appear repeatedly throughout his works.

There are other metaphors for language. A common one is *language as family*, which can be found in metaphorical expressions, such as the "Indo-European family of languages", "our mother language", "sister languages", among others. As such, we can say that a language "descends" from another and that it pertains to a certain "family". (SEARGENT, 2009, p. 384).

Another powerful metaphor is that of *language as a possession*. Seargent (2009, p. 384) suggests that language understood as a possession "is one of the fundamental metaphors for contemporary understandings of language", among others, such as "language is a family." He offers examples of linguistic manifestations of the possession metaphor in everyday discourse "taken from the British National Corpus (BNC) and from mainstream media sources" (p.386). Two of these are: "My Portuguese, of course, was as excellent as my English" (BNC, H9N 2654) and "The exiles who also lost their language" (The Independent, December 26, 2000). Chomsky (2002, p. 47) also uses the possession metaphor when he affirms: "This language organ or 'faculty of language' as we may call it, is a common human possession, varying little across the species (…)."

Language is a game is another productive metaphor. Wittgenstein (1958, p.5) states: "I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the 'language-game'". Both Wittgenstein and Saussure use the chess metaphor. Among the many references to chess to explain what language is and how it works, Wittgenstein (1958, p.15) claims: "The shape of the chessman corresponds here to the sound or shape of a word", while Saussure (1966) explains the functioning of language by saying that "[T]he respective value of the pieces depends on their position on the chessboard just as each linguistic term derives its value from its opposition to all the other terms" (p.28).

In the next section, I will discuss the metaphors for language learning.

2. METAPHORS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

The prevalent metaphor of today is language *acquisition*, which is either used for the mother tongue or for additional languages. Second language acquisition points to a field of research, in which several books on the subject contain the noun "acquisition" in their titles. This term also appears in books dealing with specific aspects of language, such as "the acquisition of syntax", "vocabulary acquisition", or "the acquisition of prepositions". The acquisition metaphor is present in a wide range of theories. Lado (1964, p.7), for instance, one of the supporters of the

behaviorist approach for language teaching, sees the *acquisition* of automatic skills as part of the process of language learning; Schumman (1978) studies the *acquisition* of negatives by Alberto, a 33-year old Porto Rican. Chomsky (2002) postulated the existence of a language *acquisition* device, and his followers in SLA research, such as White (1987) and Gregg (1996), also use the acquisition metaphor. One can find the acquisition metaphor even in the works whose focus is on the social aspect of learning, as in the interaction hypothesis (LONG and HATCH, 1978; LONG, 1980) and in the output hypothesis (SWAIN, 1993; 2000), although Swain seems to prefer to use learning rather than acquisition. The output metaphor was criticized because it was seen as part of the conduit metaphor. Swain (2006) acknowledged the criticism and replaced *output* with *languaging*. It is interesting to observe that the acquisition metaphor does not appear in Swain (2006). Instead, she uses "second language proficiency" and "language learning".

Krashen (1978) proposed to distinguish *acquisition* from *learning*. For him, acquisition is an unconscious process and learning a conscious one. By so doing, he denies that they represent two sides of the same coin and does not accept that learning and acquisition are both parts of the same process. For him, the function of learning is simply monitoring. Although other SLA researchers continued to use both acquisition and learning interchangeably, this dualism has met its doom in the realm of SLA research, and today, when an author refuses to acknowledge the proposed difference, it is always necessary to make it clear that they understand the distinction but will use the terms alternatively. Swain (1993, p.159), for instance, used both with a slash, when she says: "[T]he output hypothesis proposes that through producing language, either spoken or written, language acquisition/learning may occur (Swain, 1985)".

However, our problem here is not only about the distinction between learning and acquisition, but also about the inadequacy of the acquisition metaphor. When a metaphor undergoes criticism, it disturbs the academic community whose members either admit that they will not take a position or make an effort to offer a better one to substitute or complement the metaphor under attack.

Even when a metaphor is not explicitly mentioned, it might be inferred in expressions pertaining to the same frame. The metaphor "language as a possession", for instance, underlies the metaphorical expression "language acquisition". Language is understood as a commodity, something the learner (a recipient) acquires from those who possess it. This metaphor presupposes that language is a collection of objects acquired along the learning process and then becomes the possessor of this treasure.

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149

Another recurrent metaphor is the metaphor of growth. "Language growth" can be found in the title of an article by Van Geert (1991) and the "growth of grammar" in the title of a book by Guasti (2002). This metaphor also appears in several other works, such as those published by Van Geert (1995) and De Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor (2007). Van Geert (1995, p.314) defines growth by saying: "A process is called growth if it is concerned with the increase or decrease (i.e. negative increase) of one or more properties, and if that increase is the effect of a mechanism intrinsic to that process." The metaphor of growth is rooted in biology, in the growth of plants, and learning is seen as a living being.

With the present interest in the social culture theory, the acquisition metaphor alone is no longer enough to explain any kind of learning. Sfard (1998, p.5), a Mathematics educator, tells us that "[S]ince the dawn of civilization, human learning is conceived of as an acquisition of something" and, inspired in Lave and Wenger (1991), proposed the *participation* metaphor[3] (becoming member of a community) to complement the acquisition metaphor (mind as recipient).

Sfard (1998, p. 7) presents the metaphorical mapping for both metaphors, according to which the acquisition metaphor presupposes that the goal of learning is for the individual's enrichment and that learning is the acquisition of something. The student is seen as a recipient, a consumer, and a (re-)constructor, while the teacher is seen as a provider, a facilitator, and a mediator. In this mapping, knowledge is conceptualized as individual and public property, possession, and commodity. Thus knowing is having or possessing.

As a counterpart, the goal of learning in the participation metaphor mapping is community building, and learning is conceptualized as becoming a participant of a community. The student is seen as a peripheral participant, an apprentice, and the teacher as an expert participant, preserver of practice or discourse. Hence knowing is belonging, participating, and communicating.

Larsen-Freeman (2002, p.37), makes a synthesis of Sfard's ideas by saying that

> While the AM [acquisition metaphor] stresses the individual mind and what goes 'into it,' the PM [participation metaphor] shifts the focus to the evolving bond between the individual and others. Learning is taking part and at the same time becoming part of a greater whole.

She adds that:

> Those that operate within *an* acquisition metaphor study the language acquisition of individuals, and evidence of the individuals' success is sought in their acquisition of target rules

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3 I do not agree that "participation" is a metaphor; this will be discussed in section 4.

and structures. Those that operate within a participation metaphor study the language use of socially constituted individuals within groups, and seek evidence of success in the learners becoming participants in the discourse of a community.

Paavola and Hakkarainen (2005) also discuss a set of metaphors related to learning and knowledge: knowledge acquisition, participation, and knowledge creation. The authors
remind the readers that "the acquisition view relies on the idea that knowledge is a property of an individual mind; an individual is the basic unit of knowing and learning." (p. 537). They add that:

> So this approach is easily connected to a 'folk theory' of mind according to which the mind is a container of knowledge, and learning is a process that fills the container, implanting knowledge there (Bereiter 2002). On the other hand, this metaphor appears to be connected also with active, constructivist theories of learning, that is, individualistic versions of constructivism. The acquisition view emphasizes *propositional* knowledge and *conceptual knowledge structures* (p. 537).

For them, acquisition is a monological view of human cognition because it sees things happening within the mind. Supported by Sfard (1998) and Lave and Wenger (1991), Paavola and Hakkarainen (2005, p.538) explain that in the participation metaphor "learning is an interactive process of participating in various cultural practices and shared learning activities that structure and shape cognitive activity in many ways, […] and learning is seen as a process of becoming a member of a community and acquiring the skills to communicate and act according to its socially negotiated norms." The participation metaphor represents "a 'dialogical' view where the interaction with the culture and other people, as well as with the surrounding (material) environment, is emphasized."

The third metaphor, knowledge creation, represents "a kind of individual and collective learning that goes beyond the information given and advances knowledge and understanding: there is collaborative, systematic development of common objects of activity" (PAAVOLA and HAKKARAINEN, 2005, p. 536). The authors view this metaphor as a "trialogical" approach because the emphasis is not only on individuals or on the community, but also on the way people collaboratively develop mediating artifacts" (p. 539).

Paavola and Hakkarainen's study is merely one of the many works inspired by Sfard (1998). Her idea has been well accepted within Applied Linguistics, and researchers, such as Donato (2000), Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000), Graham (2001) and Johnson (2004), among others, inspired by her work, defend the same meta-

phor for SLA. In spite of an apparent consensus surrounding the new metaphor, others have also been proposed.

Larsen-Freeman (2002, p.38) defends the need for a larger lens to deal with the phenomenon and suggested *chaos/complexity* theory as a metaphorical means to overcome "the acquisition versus use/participation dilemma." She argues that such a perspective avoids reductionism and encourages us to see the interconnections among the parts of the system.

In another article, Larsen-Freeman (2006, p.591) claims that "most researchers in the field have operated within a 'developmental ladder' metaphor (FISCHER et al., 2003)" and claims that development should be seen "as a complex process of dynamic construction within multiple ranges in multiple directions" (FISCHER et al. 2003).

Larsen-Freeman (2006) refers to Fisher, Yan, and Stewart (2003), who present a study on the two main metaphors for adult cognitive development: ladders and webs. They explain that the ladder metaphor conceptualizes development as a straight line, one step after the other, whereas the development metaphor portrays development as a multidirectional construction, occurring in a complex, multi-level range and undergoing dynamic transformation. I would add that the ladder metaphor is within the frame of the orientational metaphors which implies that "more is up" and "good is up". The higher up the ladder, the more you know. This web metaphor can be found in the connectionism theory (WARING, 1996; ELLIS and SCHMIDT, 1997). According to Waring (1996), connectionists "use the terms nodes and networks, which are said to represent a crude but effective approximation of the neural state of the brain at a superficial level."

Later on, Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008), again rejecting the acquisition/participatory dichotomy, argue that they "seek to view mind, body, and world relationally and integratively – as constituting a single ecological circuit" (p.116). They propose the term '*development*'[4] and explain that it implies the dynamic interaction between a person and his/her context and the idea of continuous change. In addition, the term implies that a ready-made system is not yet available, and that "learners have the capacity to create their own patterns with meaning and uses" (p.116). The authors emphasize that "a language is not a single homogeneous construct to be acquired," but rather "an ever-developing resource, albeit one with some stability" (p.116). Nonetheless, it is not easy to avoid the metaphors unconsciously rooted in our thoughts. When they use the expression "ever-developing resource",

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4 It is important to say that Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008: 115) do not refer to "acquisition" and neither to "development" as metaphors, but as "terms".

the metaphor underlying the expression is that of commodity, as in the acquisition metaphor.

Communication is at the core of some SLA theories and the concept of communication is also understood by means of metaphors. This is traditionally seen through the lens of the conduit metaphor (REDDY, 1979), that is, communication is the act of transferring information from one person (sender) to another (receivers) by means of words. De Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor (2007), who claim that language acquisition emerges through interaction, suggest that the *dance metaphor* can explain some of the basics of the dynamic system approach (DST) approach. They view communication in light of DST and propose the metaphor of communication as a dance. De Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor (2007, p.9) explain that

> The metaphor originates from Sue Savage-Rumbaugh's work on the linguistic abilities of great apes, where she observes that language comprehension is based on inter-individual routines that are like "a delicate dance with many different scores, the selection of which is being constantly negotiated while the dance is in progress, rather than in advance" (SAVAGE--RUMBAUGH et al., 1993, p. 27).

These authors claim that "complex patterns emerge from the interaction between the two dancers, and even increasingly more complex and unpredictable patterns will emerge over time when one pair of dancers interacts with other pairs on the dance floor." In this view, "voice, rhythm and facial expressions interact to create mutual understanding and agreement on steps to take" (de BOT, LOWIE, and VERSPOOR, 2007, p.9), and communication is understood as a system in constant adaptation and change. Similar to dancers, there are moments of both synchrony and asynchrony, and partners make attempts to adapt to each other.

The concern with metaphors in the SLA field has led two Associations of Applied Linguistics in Oceania, ALANZ and ALAA[5], to discuss "Participation and acquisition: Exploring these metaphors in Applied Linguistics" in their first combined Conference held in Auckland, New Zealand, in 2009. The call for papers stated:

> A number of current debates in applied linguistics centre on Sfard's distinction between 'participation' (i.e. the idea that language use and language learning should be viewed as essentially a social phenomenon) and 'acquisition' (i.e. the idea that language use and language learning are best viewed in terms of cognitive processes). Conference participants are encouraged to explore one or both of these metaphors in their own research and, if possible, to examine in

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5 ALANZ is the acronym for the Applied Linguistics Association of New Zealand; ALLA is the acronym for Applied Linguistics Association of Australia.

what ways the epistemological and methodological differences inherent in the two metaphors might be reconciled[6].

Unfortunately, few participants addressed the theme. One exception was Ortega (2009), in her plenary address, who defended the benefits of metaphorical polyphony and justified her proposal by quoting (Sfard, 1998, p. 11): "When two metaphors compete for attention and incessantly screen each other for possible weaknesses, there is a much better chance for producing a critical theory of learning." Then, Ortega, inspired by Bhabha (2004), proposed a new metaphor: "In-Betweenness as a needed addition to our patchwork of metaphors for L2 learning." She explained that "In-betweenness can be useful as a tool for thinking of L2 learning as a self-transforming and power-ridden experience".

Ortega is for the undoing of dichotomous thinking and, with the support of Toohey (1999, p. 134), she says:

> What a rejection of a centre-periphery conceptualization offers is the recognition that social collectivities have already incorporated those who are marginalized; as Freire (1970) puts it, the oppressed are not marginal: "They have always been 'inside' – inside the structure that made them beings for others" (p. 55).

Ortega (2009) defends the need to go beyond both the binaries and the existence of "in-betweenness (interstices)" between native and non-native; L1 and L2; self and other; center and periphery. She believes in "[s]trategically recruiting the consciousness of I-B[7] to create new forms of P[8] that merge appropriation-plus-resistance, contestation-plus-collaboration." She adds that learning not only happens through in-betweenness, but also results in in-betweenness, "produc[ing] new forms of knowledge, new modes of differentiation, new sites of power… at once a mode of appropriation and of resistance".

Ortega concludes that learning L2 is the sum of acquisition plus participation and in-betweenness, as presented in her last slide, is defined as follows:

> L2 learning = A+P+I-B
> A=Gaining ownership over additional languages and discourses
> P=Participating in new communities and co-constructing additional identities
> I-B=Achieving an interstitial look or consciousness of power and discovering in-betweenness as a new possibility for being in the world

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6 Available at < http://www.conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=ca1mhi8s>
7 I-B stands for in-betweenness.
8 P stands for participation.

The in-betweenness metaphor, from a different perspective, calls to our minds the concept of interlanguage, a space metaphor used by Selinker (1972) to refer to the language produced by learners in the process of learning a new language.

But is participation really a metaphor? To discuss this, we must first understand what metaphors and metonyms are.

3. METAPHOR AND METONYMY

In the SLA literature, I have, to date, found no work mentioning metonymy. In addition, no authors mention metonymy to refer to the concepts of language or language learning. The only mention I found to metonymy to explain concepts of "language" was in the Linguistic field, in a paper by Seargent (2009, p.390), who claims that "'language' operates as a metonym for the language community who use the language" and mentions the example of when one says that "one language (e.g. Japanese) has borrowed terms from another language (e.g. English)". He adds that 'language' is also a metonym "for the linguistic practices of the speech community" as used "[i]n a phrase such as 'the English language changed after the Norman conquest'".

Koch (1999, p. 139) acknowledges that even scholars get confused with the difference between metaphor and metonymy and "in general, it is metonymies that are reduced to metaphors". It is my contention that distinguishing metaphor from metonymy can help us understand the prevalent "metaphors" in our field.

Metaphor and metonymy have been traditionally treated as figures of speech: metaphor as one topic leading to another by means of similarity, and metonymy as one topic leading to another by means of contiguity, as posited by Jakobson (1956, p. 129).

Radden and Kövecses (1999, p. 17) argue that:

> Unlike metaphor, metonymy has always been described in conceptual, rather than purely linguistic terms. In analyzing metonymic relationships, traditional rhetoric operated with general conceptual notions such as CAUSE FOR EFFECT, CONTAINER FOR CONTENTS, etc. Still metonymy was mainly seen as a figure of speech, i.e., it was basically thought of as a matter of language, especially literary or figurative language.

In line with Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Radden and Kövecses (1999, p. 21) offer a cognitive view of metonymy as a conceptual phenomenon, a cognitive process operating "within an idealized cognitive model[9]", which include the cultural

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9 Idealized cognitive models are, according to Lakoff (1990), structures that organize our knowledge.

and encyclopedic knowledge of a particular domain. They define metonymy as "a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same idealized cognitive model". Thus, when one says that "she reads Shakespeare", Shakespeare (the author) is the vehicle for accessing the target, Shakespeare's literature (the product), and both are within the idealized cognitive model of Shakespeare and his production.

They add that this view of metonymy is present in standard definitions, such as those found in dictionaries. The idea of contiguity was not abandoned by modern theories, but, as reported by Koch (1999, p.144), we see it today as a matter of conceptual relation.

Gibbs (1999, p.61) joins Croft (1993) to defend that "metonymy is now widely recognized as a particular type of mental mapping, again whereby we conceive of an entire person, object, or event by understanding a salient part of a person, object, or event".

Koch (1999, 2004) explains the concept of metonymy by referring to the theory of frame (non-linguistic conceptual wholes), which he considers compatible with the notion of 'contiguity'. According to Koch (1999, p.146), "contiguity is the relation that exists between elements of a frame or between the frame as a whole and its elements." Koch acknowledges that there are problems with the concepts of contiguity and frame because there is often no associative link or something is not in the frame. As an example, he mentions calling a public house a bar, even if it does not have a counter. Nevertheless, we can still understand these metonymies because they work "on the basis of prototypical frames and contiguities" (KOCH, 1999, p.150).

Koch (1999, p.154) harkens back to the previously mentioned definition of contiguity and rephrases it by saying that:

> [...] contiguity is a salient relation that exists between the elements (or sub-frames) of a conceptual frame or between the frame as a whole and its elements. Consequently, metonymy implies a contiguity-based figure/ground effect between elements of a conceptual frame or between the frame as a whole and one of its elements (or vice versa).

Koch (1999, p.159) concludes that the integration of the associationist paradigm (contiguity), gestalt theory (figure//ground), frame theory, and prototype theory is useful in understanding the mechanisms underlying metonymy.

Lakoff (1990, p.84) presents the following characteristics for a metonymic model:

- There is a "target" concept A to be understood for some purpose in some context.
- There is a conceptual structure containing both A and another concept B.
- B is either part of A or closely associated with it in that conceptual structure. Typically a choice of B will uniquely determine A, within that conceptual structure.
- Compared to A, B is either easier to understand, easier to remember, easier to recognize, or more immediately useful for the given purpose in the given context.
- A metonymic model is a model of how A and B are related in conceptual structure; the relationship is specified by a function from B to A.

Section 4, stakes the claim that participation is not a metaphor, but a metonym.

4. PARTICIPATION METONYM

Taking Lakoff's model as a reference, I claim that 'participation" is a metonym, given that:

- Participation (B) is used to understand language learning (A).
- Participation is within a structure containing both learning and participation.
- Participation is closely associated with learning in the sociocultural perspective.
- Participation is useful to convey the idea that we learn a language by using it.
- Participation is related to language learning by a cause-and-effect contiguity, much like participating in an imagined or real community is an essential condition for learning an additional language.

It is also possible to explain participation as a metonym if we use the concept of the *frame*. The frame for community, according to the FrameNet[10] project, is "aggregate", which is defined as "the people of an area or country considered collectively; society" and is underlined by the container and possessor metaphors. I would add that, in the case of language learning community, this frame might also involve an imagined community, mainly in the case where learners are in places different from those where the language is spoken.

The frame for participation, according to the FrameNet, is "the act of *participating* in a process or the state of participating in a relationship." Participation, therefore, is defined as:

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10 The FrameNet project is housed at the International Computer Science Institute in Berkeley, California, at https://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/fndrupal/.

An Event with multiple Participants takes place. It can be presented either symmetrically with Participants or asymmetrically, giving Participant_1 greater prominence over Participant_2. If the Event is engaged in intentionally, then there is typically a shared Purpose between the Participants. It is, however, possible that an expressed Purpose only applies to Participant_1. So, participation is an act which happens within an aggregate of individuals.

In the annotation for community, found in the FrameNet project, one can find the following elements: aggregate, aggregate property, container_possessor, domain, individuals, and name. For participation, the elements include: degree of involvement, duration, event, institution, manner, means, participants, participant_1, participant_2, place, purpose, and time.

In the case of language learning, learners participate asymmetrically in the additional language community, and their degree of involvement will depend upon several factors (purposes, time, affordances, degree of involvement, duration, types of event, institutional involvement, mediation, etc.). As such, in order to fully apprehend what learning a language is, we must continue to try to understand the many aspects of that phenomenon.

The participation metonym highlights an important aspect of additional language learning – social participation, but other aspects are hidden. It does not account, for instance, for the mental processes.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have seen several metaphors and one important metonym which together can give us a picture of the complexity of language learning. When a metaphor points to a phenomenon, it highlights one of the aspects of a concept, but hides others. Donato (2000, p. 40-41) explains:

For example, if one adopts as the dominant metaphor of acquisition – the 'taking' and possessing of knowledge – as indices of achievement, then failure to achieve may be explained away by reference to an individual's low aptitude, lack of motivation, or inappropriate learning strategies. If one adopts the participation metaphor, alternate reasons for an individual's failure to achieve could be posited, such as the individual's marginalization from a community of practice, insufficient mediation from an expert, or scant access to a learning community.

As put by Sfard (1998, p. 11), participation "defies the traditional distinction between cognition and affect, brings social factors to the fore, and thus deals with an incomparably wider range of possibly relevant aspects.

Although I think we are still in the quest for a good metaphor, I would like to join Sfard (1998, p. 12) and her followers and also defend that:

> As researchers, we seem to be doomed to living a reality constructed from a variety of metaphors. We have to accept the fact that the metaphors we use while theorizing may be good enough to fit small areas, but none of them suffice to cover the entire field.

I agree with Ortega (2009) that we need a metaphor polyphony, but metonymy must not be disregarded, given that essential cognitive and environmental aspects are portrayed in the myriad of metaphors and metonyms used by the main authors in the SLA research field. In this direction, the metaphors and the metonyms I have found in this research for both language and language learning can help us understand the complex phenomenon of language and language learning.

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