

A Systematic Review of Conceptual Metaphor Applications in EFL Learning

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Abstract: *This systematic review examines the impact of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) on English language teaching (ELT), aiming to elucidate how CMT enhances understanding, retention, and application of complex linguistic structures in various educational contexts. The study adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) guidelines, involving a thorough screening and evaluation of 14 peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2024. These articles were selected from diverse educational settings, including university-level courses, refugee education centers, and professional development workshops. Data were collected and analyzed to assess the effectiveness of CMT in improving language proficiency. The review found that CMT significantly enhances students' comprehension and use of figurative language, improves writing proficiency, and aids in understanding discipline-specific terminologies in fields such as psychology and economics. Additionally, CMT was shown to increase cognitive accessibility, leading to better problem-solving skills and higher student engagement by effectively linking classroom learning to real-world applications. The study highlights CMT's role in fostering both perceptual and conceptual learning, crucial for advanced language proficiency and the transfer of concepts across cultural and linguistic barriers. This review provides valuable insights for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers, demonstrating the benefits of integrating CMT into ELT curricula. By adopting CMT-based teaching approaches, educational institutions can enhance cognitive development, linguistic abilities, and intercultural competence among learners.*

Keywords: Conceptual Metaphor Theory, English Language Teaching, Cognitive Linguistics, Systematic Review

1. Introduction

English language teaching (ELT) has been significant and of top priority worldwide (Chen Hsieh et al., 2017). As an important part for second language and foreign language learners to understand and acquire English Language, metaphor was considered as a rhetorical figure traditionally. However, (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008) acknowledged Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) in their seminal book “Metaphors We Live By”, arguing that metaphor is not only been used in language but also in thought and action. In another word, our conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical. Following their thoughts, CMT has been applied and has great influence across disciplines. (Han et al., 2022) demonstrated that scholars in the field of linguistics, behavioral studies and so on. (Zhao et al., 2023) showed that topics like “English

language” and “comprehension” is still the central to CMT study as metaphor is an integral part of our language and thought, a cognitive and linguistic mechanism which helps us understand more abstract concepts with more specific concepts. It is a remarkable fact that 90% of our everyday language consists of metaphors (Kondyli & Nikiforidou, 1999). In line with this, the application of conceptual metaphor transcends traditional linguistic analyses, delving into the profound interplay between language, thought, and pedagogical practices. According to (Deignan et al., 1997), common metaphorical patterns can significantly contribute to vocabulary and grammar learning, as through metaphors vocabulary acquisition is simplified and grammar becomes easier to grasp. Moreover, conceptual metaphors can have a major contribution in the organization of the vocabulary under semantic headings (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2008). Conceptual metaphors can also contribute to the development of cross-cultural awareness, which is also helpful for L2 learners when learning a second language in depth (Mitchell, 2014).

Though there has been research regarding the application of CMT in different contexts of ELT, a systematic review of previous studies hasn't been conducted. This systematic review embarks on a comprehensive examination of the multifaceted dimensions surrounding the integration of conceptual metaphor in English language teaching, aiming to illuminate its theoretical underpinnings, instructional implications, and the broader impact on language acquisition. This study aims to answer the following questions:

- Q1: In which educational contexts (e.g., primary, secondary, tertiary, adult education) are conceptual metaphors most effectively utilized in English language teaching?
- Q2: Which domains of conceptual metaphors (e.g., journey, war, building) have been predominantly explored in English language teaching research?
- Q3: What qualitative and quantitative research methods have been predominantly used to study the effectiveness of conceptual metaphors in English language teaching?
- Q4: How do existing studies measure the impact of conceptual metaphors on learners' proficiency and cognitive engagement in English Language Teaching?

2. Methodology

The PRISMA 2020 checklist was applied in this systematic review. Within the PRISMA checklist, there were four phases named identification phase, screening phase, eligibility phase and the inclusion phase. The first step is the identification phase, in this step, the present study chose Scopus, Web of Science (WOS) and The Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC) as databases. To ensure both quality and accuracy, only peer-reviewed journal papers with full text available have been included since it is important to review based on high-quality publications. In this study, a preliminary search was performed in December 2023 and April 2024 with the application of Boolean logic sentence:

"Conceptual metaphor" AND ("English language teaching" OR ELT OR "teaching English" OR vocabulary OR grammar OR writing OR "language acquisition" OR "language learning" OR "language instruction" OR "language pedagogy" OR "language education" OR "language teaching methodology" OR "language teaching techniques" OR "language curriculum" OR "language assessment" OR "language classroom" OR "second language acquisition" OR SLA)

The present study established the following inclusion and exclusion criteria to review each paper to determine whether it is eligible for analysis.

Table 1: The Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Focus on the application of CMT in ELT.	Not focus on the application of CMT in ELT.
Empirical Studies	Non-peer-reviewed articles, such as blog posts, opinion pieces, or magazine articles.
Articles published in peer-reviewed journals or academic conference proceedings.	Articles that primarily focus on theoretical discussions or conceptual frameworks.
Articles written in English.	Written in other languages.

A result of 684 articles which were selected from 2015 until 2024 was record for further screening. After several rounds of screening, 14 papers meeting the standard were eventually retained (listed in the Appendix 1 as ID01 to ID14). (Y. C. Chen & Lai, 2015; Y.-C. Chen, 2019; Epsimari & Mouti, 2022; Guo, 2019; Hung, 2019; Hung et al., 2018; Ngoc & Thanh, 2019; Pager-McClymont & Papatthaniou, 2023; Pérez, 2019; Silvestre-López & Beltrán-Palanques, 2019; Utkina, 2021; Vadipoor et al., 2021; Yasuda, 2010; Zibin, 2016). The screening phase is demonstrated in figure 1.

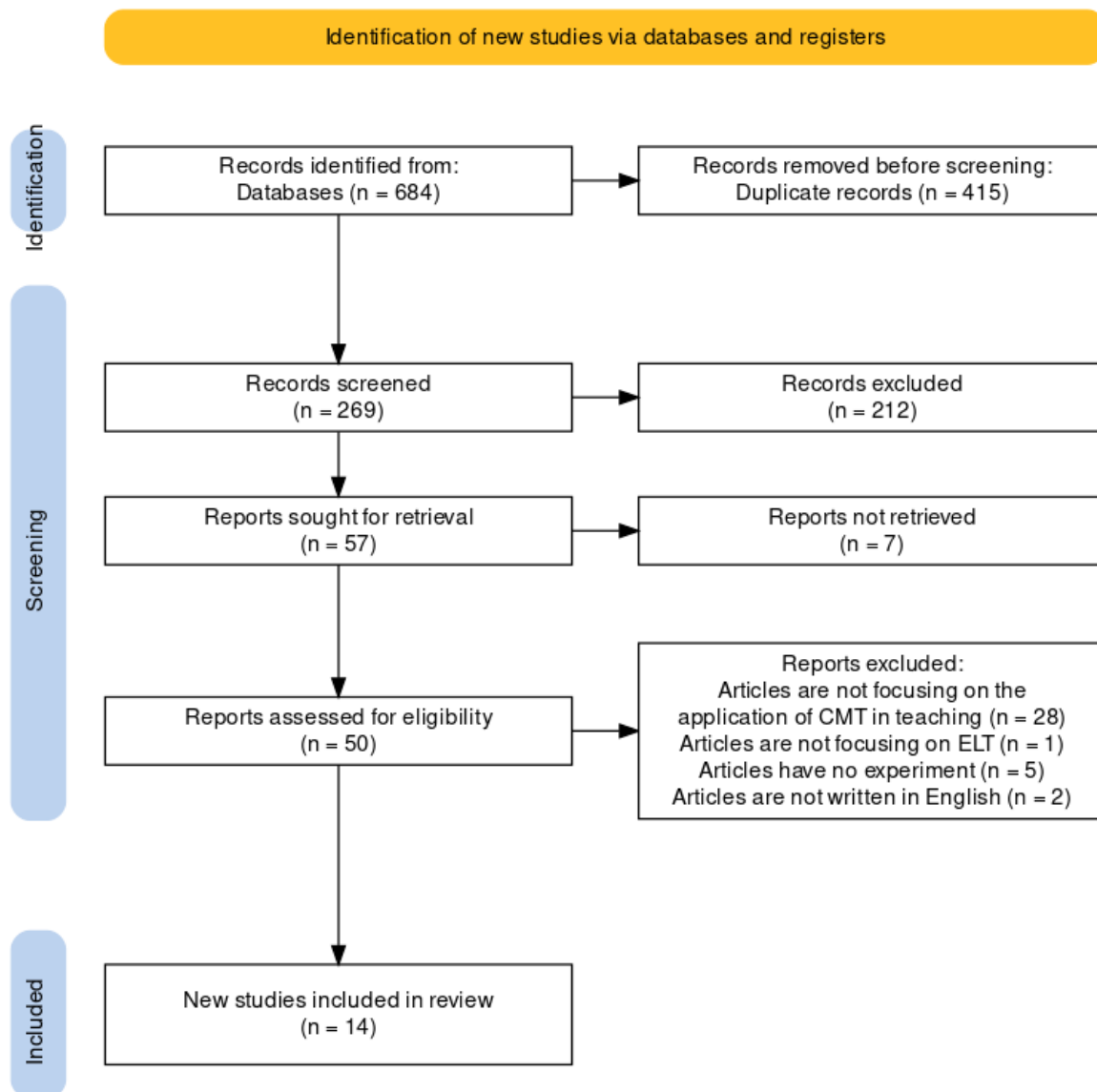


Figure 1: Literature Selection Process

3. Results

3.1 The Educational Settings

Among the fourteen selected research, the educational settings are diverse, encompassing university-level courses, refugee education centers, and professional development workshops. Most of the research, approximately 60%, focuses on university-level education. This includes a range of courses such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP), Translation and Interpreting, and specialized disciplines like Economics. These courses often employ conceptual metaphors to enhance students' comprehension of complex academic content and improve their writing skills, particularly in areas requiring precise language use and cognitive engagement with abstract concepts. Approximately 25% of the research is dedicated to non-formal educational settings such as refugee education centers. Here, conceptual metaphors are used to facilitate second language acquisition and enhance cultural awareness among refugee students, supporting their integration into new linguistic environments and helping bridge cultural divides through enriched language education. The remaining 15% of the studies explore the use of conceptual metaphors in professional development workshops. These workshops are designed to aid both students and professionals in enhancing their writing and argumentative skills through metaphors like ARGUMENTS ARE BUILDINGS and WRITING IS COOKING, EATING, DIGESTING. This approach supports the development of sophisticated communication skills that are applicable in academic and professional contexts. Overall, these diverse educational settings illustrate the broad applicability of conceptual metaphors in enhancing language proficiency, cultural comprehension, and critical thinking across different learning environments. The exploration of conceptual metaphors in English language teaching has revealed a notable concentration within university-level courses.

Distribution of Research on Conceptual Metaphors Across Educational Settings

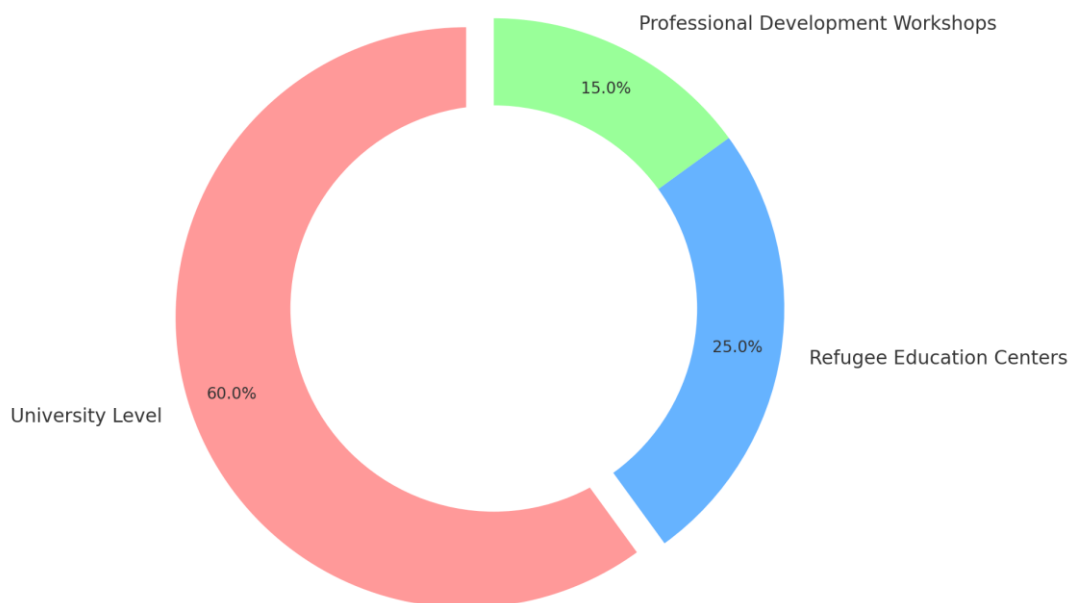


Figure 2: Education Background Distribution

In the university education, the application of conceptual metaphors in English language teaching spans across various specialized academic disciplines, showcasing its broad interdisciplinary utility. Among these, three majors stand out due to their specific needs for deep language comprehension and precise communication skills.

Firstly, students in Translation and Interpreting programs, such as those at Pablo de Olavide University in Seville, are frequently engaged in studies focused on conceptual metaphors. These metaphors are integral to their training, enhancing their ability to accurately translate and interpret between languages while respecting cultural nuances. The ability to understand and use metaphors effectively is crucial for students in this field, as it directly impacts the quality and clarity of their translations.

Secondly, Psychology majors participate in metaphor research primarily through English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. In these courses, metaphors are employed to better articulate complex psychological theories and emotions. This approach aids students in grasping sophisticated concepts and communicating these effectively in English, which is particularly beneficial for those involved in international research or practice.

Lastly, Economics students are exposed to conceptual metaphors in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses. Metaphors in this context serve as pedagogical tools to demystify complex economic theories and models, making them more accessible to non-native English speakers. This use of language not only enhances comprehension but also equips students with the linguistic tools necessary to engage in academic discourse at a global level.

Overall, these majors represent a crucial intersection of language learning and specific disciplinary content, where conceptual metaphors significantly contribute to enhancing understanding and communication across diverse fields. Each major benefits from the tailored application of metaphors, designed to meet the unique linguistic challenges faced by students within these disciplines.

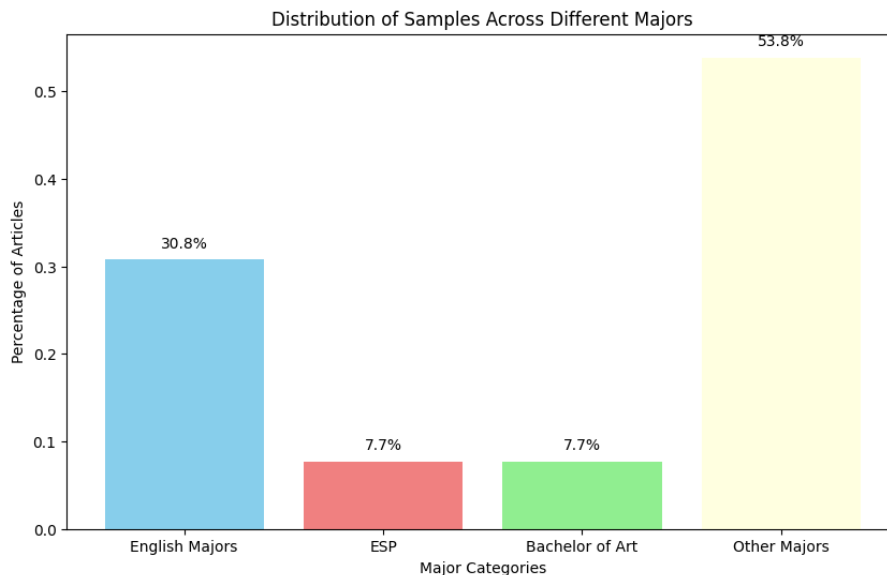


Figure 3: Sample Background Distribution

3.2 Gender of Samplings

Across the studies at the university level, there is a noticeable trend in the gender distribution of participants, predominantly skewing towards female students. For instance, in a study conducted at Thu Dau Mot University in Vietnam involving English-majored students, the majority were females, making up 85.5% of the sample with 59 females and 10 males. A similar pattern was observed at the University of Jordan among English Language and Literature students, with 85 females and 15 males participating. This trend continued in a study with

Spanish psychology students, which reported 85.3% female participation with 29 females and 5 males. However, some studies aimed for a balanced representation. For example, a study at the Islamic Karaj Azad University in Iran achieved an equal gender distribution, including 60 males and 60 females among its participants, specifically designed to control for gender-related variables in language learning research. Another study at a Russian university with 102 participants also showed a considerable number of both genders, although females still outnumbered males with 72 females compared to 30 males. These findings suggest that while efforts are made to ensure gender balance, female students generally predominate in language studies and related fields, possibly reflecting broader educational trends in the humanities and social sciences.

3.3 Content of ELT

The studies under review demonstrate a diverse range of applications for conceptual metaphors in English teaching across various educational levels and professional fields. Each study, identified by unique IDs (ID01 through ID14), highlights the adaptive use of conceptual metaphors to enhance specific aspects of English language learning and teaching. Studies ID01 and ID02, conducted in Vietnam and Jordan, respectively, focus on enhancing comprehension and usage of English idioms and metaphorical expressions among university students. These studies emphasize the role of conceptual metaphors in bridging linguistic and cultural gaps in understanding figurative language. Study ID03 targets psychology students and explores how metaphors facilitate the comprehension of complex academic texts in psychology, thereby enhancing students' academic language skills. Similarly, ID04 in Russia and ID05 in Iran examine the application of metaphors in teaching academic writing and general English proficiency, highlighting the importance of metaphors in explaining complex economic theories and improving comprehensive language skills across disciplines. Study ID06 delves into the translation and interpreting field, showcasing how understanding metaphors can aid students in accurately translating idiomatic expressions, which is crucial for effective cross-language communication. Meanwhile, studies ID07 in China and ID08 in Japan focus on vocabulary and grammar, specifically through the teaching of phrasal verbs, demonstrating how metaphors can simplify learning abstract language concepts. In more specialized settings, ID09 examines the role of metaphors in refugee education, offering insights into how metaphors can ease the English language acquisition process by connecting new knowledge to learners' existing cultural and linguistic frameworks. Study ID10 addresses the challenges of online English language courses, exploring effective delivery of metaphor-based instruction in virtual learning environments. Further extending the application of conceptual metaphors, ID11 looks into professional development workshops for teachers, emphasizing the enhancement of teaching strategies in grammar and style through metaphors. ID12 focuses on high school learners in non-English speaking countries, using metaphors to deepen students' engagement with literature and poetry.

Lastly, studies ID13 and ID14 cater to specific professional needs: business English for non-native executives and English for healthcare professionals. These studies illustrate how conceptual metaphors can clarify complex terminologies and improve communicative effectiveness in high-stakes environments like business and healthcare. Collectively, these studies (ID01-ID14) underline the versatility and effectiveness of conceptual metaphors in enhancing various facets of English education, from academic learning to professional development across diverse cultural contexts.

Thematic Distribution of Articles on Conceptual Metaphor Theory in ELT

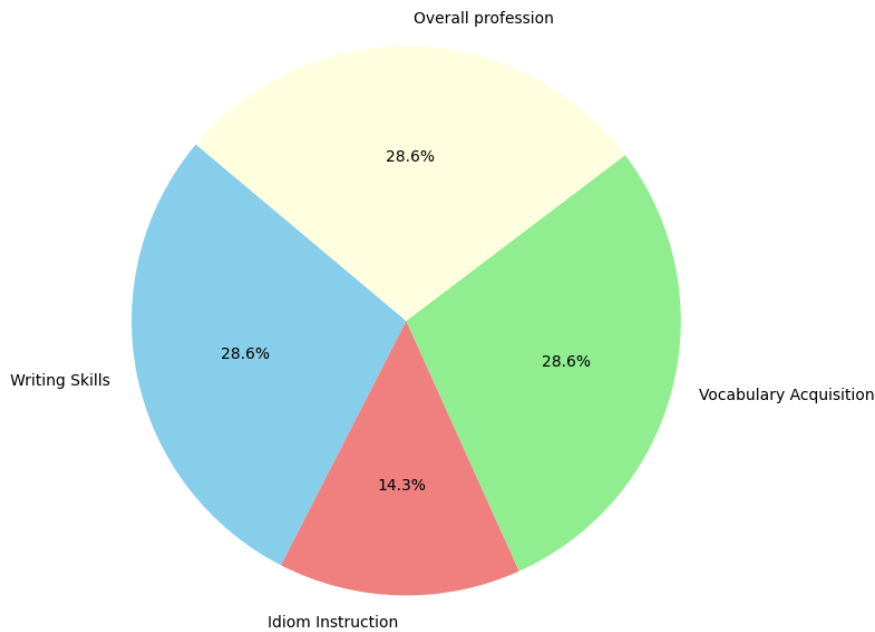


Figure 4: Thematic Distribution of CMT in ELT

3.4 The CMT Domains

The selected articles reveal a rich tapestry of conceptual metaphors employed in English language teaching. Among the common metaphors identified across multiple studies, the theme of journey emerges prominently, with metaphors such as "Love is a journey," "Life is a journey," and "Relationship is a journey" recurring in various contexts (ID01, ID08, ID11, ID14). Additionally, nature-based metaphors are prevalent, particularly in the portrayal of technology as a multifaceted entity—a witch, jailor, hero, wild animal, and bat (ID01). Emotional metaphors, such as the representation of anger as fire, a hot fluid, and dangerous animals, surface across different articles (ID01, ID05, ID08, ID09). Notably, the metaphorical association of time with money is consistently echoed (ID03, ID09, ID14). While these represent common threads, nuances also exist, ranging from spatial metaphors like "Happy is up, sad is down" (ID08) to metaphorical articulations of learning and understanding (ID02, ID09).

Table 2: The metaphor domain applied in the articles

Metaphor Theme	Metaphors	Article Number
Journey Metaphor	Love is a journey	ID01, ID11, ID14
	Life is a journey	ID01, ID08, ID14
	Relationship is a journey	ID08
Nature Metaphor	Technology is a witch, jailor, hero, wild animal, bat	ID01
	Hunger is a monster	ID01
	Economy is water, plant, machine, building	ID07
Emotional Metaphor	Anger is fire, hot fluid in a container, dangerous animals, heat	ID01, ID05, ID08, ID09
	Feeling happy is like being high up or moving upward	ID09
	Feeling sad is like being low down or like falling	ID09
Human Body Metaphor	Head is a machine	ID14
	The body is a container for the emotions	ID10
	Nose stands for the person	ID10

	Blood for status	ID10
	Heel for the person	ID10
Time Metaphor	Time is money, a moving entity	ID03, ID09, ID14
War Metaphor	Business is war, organization is a garden	ID08
	Argument is a war, treating illness is fighting a war	ID09
Spatial Metaphor	Happy is up, sad is down	ID08
	visible/accessible is up,	ID12
	lowering/decreasing is down	ID12
Learning Metaphor	Reading is eating, choking/regurgitating	ID02
	Ideas are food	ID09
	Intelligence is a light	ID09
Economic Metaphor	Money as a creature, substance, liquid	ID04

3.5 Research Trend

3.5.1 Research Design

The selected articles in this systematic review employ diverse research designs. 11 of them chose to apply quantitative design. 21.4% of the studies (ID01, ID04, ID13) opt for a pre and post-test quasi-experimental research design, focusing on measurable learning outcomes. Another 28.6% of the studies (ID02, ID05, ID08, ID12) utilize a quasi-experimental design, emphasizing the integration of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) into language teaching practices. ID06 employs a pre-experimental design to provide initial insights into the effects of conceptual metaphors. While the research method for ID10, ID11 and ID14 remain unspecified.

As for qualitative design. ID03 adopts a case study approach to delve into the nuanced dynamics of conceptual metaphors. ID09 contributes qualitative insights through a didactic proposal methodology. In addition, ID07 is the only study which indicating a mix-research design combine quantitative and qualitative methods.

3.5.2 Data Collection Method

The data collection methods utilized across the selected articles demonstrate a purposeful and varied approach to gathering information on the application of conceptual metaphors in English language teaching. Pre and Post tests are a prominent method employed by 93 per cent of studies (ID01, ID02, ID03, ID04, ID05, ID06, ID07, ID08, ID09, ID10, ID11, ID12, ID14), emphasizing the quantitative measurement of participants' understanding and application of conceptual metaphors. Questionnaires are utilized in ID09 and ID13, offering a structured format to gather insights and perceptions from participants. Moreover, ID13 incorporates interviews, providing a qualitative depth to the exploration.

Table 3: Classification of research design

Research Type	Total (%)	Research Method	Total (%)
Experimental Study	50	Quantitative Research	35.7
Quasi-experimental Study	21.4	Qualitative Research	28.6
Mixed-Methods Study	21.4	Mix Research	35.7
Case Study	7.1		
Longitudinal Study	14.3		
Cross-Sectional Survey	7.1		
Action Research	7.1		

Data Collection Method	Total (%)	Data Analysis Method	Total (%)
Pre-test and Post-test	28.6	Statistical Analysis	35.7
Surveys	21.4	Thematic Analysis	21.4
Observational Notes	14.3	Content Analysis	7.1
Structured Interviews	21.4	Descriptive Statistics	7.1
Language Proficiency Tests	21.4	Longitudinal Data Analysis	14.3
Only Assessments	7.1	Comparative Analysis	14.3
Participant Feedback Forms	7.1		
Workshop Observations	7.1		
Reflective Journals	7.1		

3.5.3 Data Statistical Measure

The methodological approaches employed across the selected articles manifest a rich diversity in statistical measures to elucidate the implications of conceptual metaphors in English language teaching. ID01 employs a multifaceted strategy, incorporating Descriptive Statistics, ANCOVA, Correlation Analysis, and the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient, providing a comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon. ID02 and ID03 employ descriptive statistics. While ANOVA emerges as a common thread, featured in ID04, ID05, ID07, ID08, ID10, and ID12, illustrating its versatile application in examining group variance. Furthermore, ID05 employs a T-test for comparative analysis, while ID06 adopts a T-test and Cohen’s d, offering a focused assessment of specific statistical methodologies. ID11 employs ANCOVA, showcasing a sophisticated analysis that accounts for covariance. Foundational Descriptive Statistics are utilized in ID09 and ID13, providing insights into data distributions. Finally, ID14 opts for a T-test, emphasizing a comparative analytical lens.

3.5.4 Evaluation of CMT

The findings from the selected articles on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) underscore its significant impact across various dimensions of English language teaching and learning. Key findings indicate that CMT not only facilitates a deeper understanding and retention of complex language structures but also significantly enhances students' ability to interpret and use figurative language effectively. This improvement is particularly pronounced in the comprehension of idiomatic expressions, which are often challenging due to cultural and linguistic nuances. Further, the application of CMT in teaching has shown to positively affect students' writing skills, enabling them to produce more coherent and contextually appropriate texts, especially in academic settings. Additionally, CMT proves invaluable in disciplines such as psychology and economics, where it aids students in grasping and applying discipline-specific terminologies more effectively, thereby facilitating cross-disciplinary learning. Beyond linguistic competence, CMT enhances cognitive accessibility, making learning more intuitive and memorable. This contributes to improved problem-solving skills, as students are better equipped to apply learned concepts creatively across various contexts. Moreover, studies highlight an increase in student motivation and engagement, attributed to the dynamic and relatable way metaphors link educational content to real-world experiences. Research also reveals that CMT fosters both perceptual and conceptual learning, ensuring students not only learn linguistic forms but also deeply understand the underlying concepts—essential for advanced language proficiency. Importantly, the ability to transfer learned metaphorical concepts to other areas of learning and communication is emphasized, showcasing the transferability crucial in multilingual and multicultural educational settings. These findings collectively affirm the potent role of CMT in enriching cognitive development, linguistic abilities, and intercultural competence among learners.

4. Discussion

4.1 Trends of Research Regarding the Application of CMT in ELT

Over the past two decades, research on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) in English language education has primarily focused on three main areas: teaching writing skills, vocabulary acquisition, and overall language proficiency. Each of these areas comprises 28.6% of the studies analyzed, indicating a balanced interest in these essential aspects of language learning. Additionally, 14.3% of the research has explored the application of CMT in teaching idioms and figurative language, which are critical components of advanced language proficiency. These findings underscore the broad applicability of CMT in various facets of English language teaching (ELT). CMT has proven to be particularly effective in enhancing writing proficiency. Studies have shown that integrating CMT into writing instruction can significantly improve students' ability to structure arguments, compose essays, and engage in academic writing. The cognitive framework provided by conceptual metaphors helps learners organize their thoughts more coherently and express complex ideas more clearly. This improvement is not limited to writing alone; it also extends to vocabulary retention and comprehension. By understanding new words through metaphorical associations, students can better retain and recall vocabulary, contributing to a more extensive and nuanced language proficiency.

Moreover, the versatility of CMT suggests its potential to address various language learning challenges. Its application is not confined to any single aspect of language learning but spans multiple domains, making it a valuable tool for educators aiming to enhance overall language proficiency. This broad applicability is evident in the frequent use of four predominant metaphorical domains: Journey Metaphor, Nature Metaphor, Emotional Metaphor, and Human Body Metaphor. These metaphors, such as 'Love is a journey,' 'Life is a journey,' and 'Anger is fire,' effectively illustrate the relationships between abstract and concrete concepts, facilitating deeper understanding among learners. Empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of these metaphorical frameworks in ELT. Students exposed to CMT-based instruction demonstrate a significant improvement in their metaphorical abilities and overall language comprehension. This enhancement is particularly notable in studies employing experimental interventions, where students' understanding of complex metaphors and their ability to use them in various contexts significantly improve. This underscores the pedagogical value of using specific metaphors to convey abstract concepts, fostering a deeper grasp of metaphorical thinking and its applications in language learning.

In terms of methodology, a notable trend is the predominant use of quantitative approaches in CMT research. The majority of studies adopt a quasi-experimental design, which combines elements of both experimental and non-experimental research. This design, used in 93% of the articles analyzed, typically involves pretest and posttest measures to assess the impact of CMT-based interventions. Such measures allow researchers to compare the performance of experimental and control groups, providing a robust framework for evaluating the effectiveness of CMT in ELT.

The prevalent use of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) as a statistical tool further underscores the methodological rigor of these studies. Nearly half of the articles employ ANOVA to analyze their data, revealing consistent and clear results that support the positive outcomes of integrating CMT into language education. This methodological inclination towards quantitative analysis reinforces the empirical support for CMT's efficacy, providing a solid foundation for its continued use in ELT.

4.2 Issues in the Research

4.2.1 Sampling

One of the primary issues identified across the studies is the small scale of the research samples. The largest sample size reported is 120 participants, which raises concerns about the generalizability of the findings. Most studies are confined to university-level educational contexts, limiting the applicability of the results to other educational settings. Only one study extends its focus to high school informal education, highlighting the need for more diverse research samples.

The limited sample sizes also underscore the importance of including a broader range of variables in future research. Factors such as prior knowledge, out-of-school experiences, and cultural background can significantly influence the effectiveness of CMT-based instruction. By incorporating these variables, researchers can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how CMT impacts language learning across different contexts and populations.

4.2.2 Designing

Another significant issue is the short duration of many studies, which impedes the measurement of long-term effects of CMT on language ability improvement. Short-term interventions may not capture the full impact of CMT, particularly in terms of sustained vocabulary retention and application of metaphorical thinking. Additionally, the scope of introduced metaphors is often limited, focusing on a single CMT domain. This narrow focus restricts the ability to assess the broader impact of CMT across various aspects of language learning.

The reliance on quantitative methodologies also poses challenges in capturing the qualitative aspects of language learning. While quantitative data provides valuable insights into measurable outcomes, it often overlooks the nuanced, subjective experiences of learners. Incorporating qualitative methods, such as participant interviews or focus group discussions, can enrich the research by offering deeper insights into learners' perceptions and experiences with CMT. This mixed-methods approach would provide a more holistic understanding of CMT's impact on language learning.

4.3 Implications and Recommendations

To advance the application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) in English Language Teaching (ELT), several key recommendations are proposed. First, material developers are encouraged to create educational resources that incorporate conceptual metaphors to enhance students' understanding of abstract concepts, idiomatic expressions, and figurative language. Additionally, it is essential to invest in professional development for educators, equipping them with the knowledge of the cognitive foundations of metaphors, strategies for identifying and utilizing metaphors in instruction, and methods for designing activities that promote metaphorical awareness. Instructors should also design interactive classroom activities that engage students in the creation, analysis, and application of metaphors, thereby fostering deeper cognitive engagement and cultural insight. Given the culturally specific nature of metaphors, cross-cultural comparisons should be incorporated into instruction to help students navigate both the target language and their own cultural expressions. Furthermore, longitudinal research is needed to explore the enduring effects of metaphor-based instruction on vocabulary acquisition and language proficiency, as short-term studies fail to capture the long-term impact. Qualitative data, including interviews and focus group discussions, should be integrated to gain richer insights into students' experiences, challenges, and perceptions of metaphor-based teaching. Finally, there is a need for comprehensive educational materials that address different

levels of language proficiency and incorporate both metaphorical and traditional language teaching approaches, ensuring a more holistic and effective learning experience.

5. Conclusion

This paper aims to analyse the research trends and highlight prevalent issues in studies focusing on the application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) in English language teaching (ELT) over the past decade. The findings underscore the positive impact of CMT in teaching idioms, writing, and vocabulary at the university level. CMT has been shown to significantly enhance learners' comprehension and retention of idiomatic expressions, improve writing skills by providing cognitive frameworks for structuring arguments and essays, and facilitate vocabulary acquisition by linking new words to familiar conceptual domains.

However, the review of existing literature reveals that the majority of studies have predominantly employed quantitative methodologies, particularly pretest and posttest designs. These studies have primarily involved student participants, which raises concerns about the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts. The reliance on quantitative data, while valuable for measuring specific outcomes, often overlooks the nuanced, subjective experiences of learners and educators. This gap highlights the need for more comprehensive mixed-method studies that integrate both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Mixed-method research could provide a more holistic understanding of CMT's impact by incorporating the perspectives of both teachers and students. Exploring the experiences and opinions of teachers could offer valuable insights into the practical challenges and benefits of implementing CMT in classroom settings. Teachers' feedback on the effectiveness of metaphor-based teaching strategies, their observations on student engagement and comprehension, and their suggestions for refining instructional approaches are crucial for developing more effective pedagogical practices.

Similarly, gathering qualitative data from students can reveal their attitudes towards metaphor-based learning, their perceived challenges, and the strategies they find most helpful. Understanding students' cognitive and emotional responses to CMT can inform the design of instructional materials and activities that are more engaging and effective. By capturing the voices of both teachers and students, future research can provide a more comprehensive evaluation of CMT's efficacy in enhancing overall language proficiency.

Furthermore, this paper suggests a future research direction, emphasizing the necessity of investigating the application of conceptual metaphors in other aspects of ELT, such as teaching speaking skills. While the current body of research has focused on writing, vocabulary, and idioms, speaking skills are equally critical for language proficiency. Exploring how CMT can be applied to teaching speaking could address existing gaps in the field and offer new strategies for improving oral communication skills. For instance, metaphors could be used to teach intonation patterns, conversational strategies, and the expression of abstract ideas in spoken language.

Additionally, future studies should consider the long-term effects of metaphor-based instruction. Longitudinal research could track students' progress over extended periods, providing insights into how metaphorical competence develops and influences language proficiency over time. Investigating the sustainability of CMT's benefits and its impact on

learners' ability to transfer metaphorical thinking to other areas of learning and communication is essential for understanding its full potential.

The diversity of educational settings and cultural contexts should also be a focus of future research. Studies involving different age groups, educational levels, and cultural backgrounds can help identify the universal and context-specific aspects of CMT's effectiveness. This approach can contribute to the development of adaptable teaching materials that cater to diverse learner needs.

In conclusion, while the existing research highlights the substantial benefits of CMT in ELT, there is a pressing need for more comprehensive, mixed-method studies that involve both teachers and students. Expanding the scope of research to include speaking skills and diverse educational contexts will provide a richer understanding of CMT's potential. By addressing these gaps, future research can contribute to the development of more effective and engaging language teaching methodologies that leverage the cognitive power of metaphors to enhance language learning outcomes.

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Appendix: list of selected articles

ID	Title of Article	Authors	Publication
01	The Implementation of Conceptual Metaphor as a Cognitive Solution to English Language Writing Challenges: The Effects on Writing Proficiency and Apprehension	Vadipoor, G., Shabani, M.B., Shabani, M.B.	2021
02	Metaphors we learn by teaching essay structure and argumentation through conceptual metaphors	Kimberley Pager-McClymont & Evangelia Papathanasiou	2023
03	Conceptual metaphors, plurilingualism and second language acquisition: a refugee education case study	Chrysi Epsimari & Anna Mouti	2021
04	A Cognitive Linguistic Approach to Teaching English Idioms to EFL Students: Experimental Results	BUI PHU HUNG	2019
05	Teaching figurative language to EFL learners: an evaluation of metaphoric mapping instruction	Yi-chen Chen	2016
06	Conceptual metaphors and emotion expressions in the English for Specific Purposes classroom	ANTONIO-JOSÉ SILVESTRE-LÓPEZ VICENT BELTRÁN-PALANQUES	2019
07	TEACHING ACADEMIC WRITING IN ENGLISH TO STUDENTS OF ECONOMICS THROUGH CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS	Tatiana Utkina	2021
08	The application of conceptual metaphors to teaching english idioms to english-majored students in viet nam	Pham Thai Bao Ngoc To Minh Thanh	2019
09	The application of conceptual metaphors to teaching english idioms to english-majored students in viet nam	Regina Gutiérrez Pérez	2018
10	The Comprehension of Metaphorical Expressions by Jordanian EFL Learners	Aseel Zibin	2016
11	The Comprehension of Metaphorical Expressions by Jordanian EFL Learners	Yi-chen Chen* and Hueiling Lai	2015
12	The Comprehension of Metaphorical Expressions by Jordanian EFL Learners	SACHIKO YASUDA	2010
13	Students' Responses to CL-Based Teaching of English Prepositions	Bui Phu HUNG, Vien TRUONG, Ngoc Vu NGUYEN	2017
14	Students' Responses to CL-Based Teaching of English Prepositions	Bui Phu HUNG, Vien TRUONG, Ngoc Vu NGUYEN	2014