

# A Look at a Small Classroom in a Big University: Through a Metaphor, Vividly

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## Abstract

*In educational research literature there are two influential metaphors about learning. They describe this process as either “acquisition” or “participation” (Sfard, 1998). These metaphors have been widely used by scholars, researchers and educators. However, the students’ perspectives on learning have been underexplored. This article addresses this gap in research literature and examines metaphors about learning created by a group of foreign language learners in a big public university in East Malaysia. The findings indicate universality of people’s perceptions about learning and reveal the presence of both the “acquisition” and “participation” metaphors in the students’ images. The study considers the implications of the findings for language pedagogy.*

**Key words:** *educational metaphors; foreign language education; student-produced metaphors.*

*“Work?” he said to me once, astonished, when  
I referred to our classroom activities as such.  
“Do you really think that what we do is work?”  
“What else should I call it?”  
“I should call it the most glorious kind of play.”  
Donna Tartt “The Secret History”*

## Introduction

The above conversation takes place between a student of Ancient Greek and his teacher and it highlights the ubiquitous presence of metaphors in our speech. It also illuminates a fact that the metaphors people use to describe a shared experience may

be very different. In this conversation, the student describes the classroom activities as “work” while the teacher defines them as “the most glorious kind of play”.

Metaphors are omnipresent in human language; they not only constitute our thinking but guide our actions (Lakoff, & Johnson, 1980; Richards, 1936). Being “important tools of cognition and communication” (Ortony, & Fainsilber, 1989, p. 181), metaphors are widely employed in discourse and research about education (Kliebard, 1982; Peters, 1973). In the context of language teaching, previous studies have explored the metaphors for language teaching curriculum (Herron, 1982; Nattinger, 1984) or focused on the teachers’ perceptions of their professional practice (de Guerrero, & Vilamil, 2001; Zapata, & Lacorte, 2007). Despite the fact that learners are central to all teaching and learning activities there is a scarcity of studies that focus on student-produced metaphors (e.g., Bozlk, 2002; Levine, 2005; Nikitina, & Furuoka, 2011; Swales, 1994).

It is important to explore students’ metaphors about learning because it makes the learners’ conceptions of this complex cognitive process “visible” and, therefore, available for making comparisons between the teacher’s and the students’ views of educational practice (Thomas, 2006, p.106). Knowing the students’ ideas about learning provides the teacher a platform for negotiating and finding a mutually acceptable meaning of the shared educational experience. This is especially important for those educators who believe that their mission includes not only imparting subject-related knowledge but also creating “dialogical learning communities” with students (Willison, & Taylor, 2006, p.26).

The present study has a potential to contribute to the existing knowledge because, firstly, it examined the student-generated metaphors about learning. Secondly, it was conducted in a less explored non-Western educational context, such as Malaysia. Considering the fact that learning experiences are highly contextualized (Hager, & Halliday, 2009), there might be some merit in exploring whether metaphors about learning have universal appeal and are applicable in various teaching and learning environments. The study focused on a group of Malaysian students learning the Russian language. The images produced by the participants were analyzed with two influential metaphors about learning in view, namely, the “*learning is acquisition*” and “*learning is participation*”. This study was conducted in an ethnographic manner and one of the researchers was also the teacher.

## Literature Review

One of the earliest known examples of a metaphor about learning is to be found in Plato’s *Theatetus*, wherein Plato described learning as “*childbirth*” (see Hager, & Halliday, 2009). Nowadays, as Sfard (1998) argues, two prominent educational metaphors define learning as either “*acquisition*” or “*participation*”. These images reflect different approaches to human cognition advocated by different schools of cognitive psychology (Sfard, 1998). The “*learning is acquisition*” metaphor is epistemologically close to the theories put forward by the behaviourist movement in psychology. From this perspective, learning is seen as a passive response to sensory

input. In other words, learning is an outcome of a neural process in which neither the individual's efforts nor social collaboration play an important role (Greeno, Collins, & Resnik, 1996). The “*acquisition*” metaphor is also supported by cognitive constructivist assumptions, according to which the new knowledge is an outcome of transforming the old schemata into new ones (Greeno, Collins, & Resnik, 1996). However, in contrast to the behaviourist interpretation of learning, cognitive constructivism recognises the active participation of the individual in this “structuring activity” (Piaget, 1980, p.23).

Sfard (1998) points out that the “*acquisition*” metaphor is so deeply entrenched in our collective conscience that the language of educational research orbits around it. For example, it is customary to describe learning in terms of “accumulation”, “transmission”, “transfer”, “retention”, “reception” and so on (Sfard, 1998, p.5). Even the learners resort to this imagery when they describe themselves as “absorbers of information” (Bozlk, 2002). The “*acquisition*” metaphor sets individual enrichment as the goal of learning; the act of learning becomes “gaining possession over some commodity” and knowing is indistinguishable from “having” or “possessing”.

Departing from these conceptions of learning, the “*learning is participation*” metaphor has roots in the “mediated action theory” developed by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978; 1981). He argued that learning occurs through the active participation of an individual in collaborative activities and that human cognition evolves through the interaction of the mental processes with the historical, institutional and cultural environment as well as with social ‘others’ (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). In essence, the “*participation*” metaphor establishes “community building” as the goal of learning; the act of learning involves “becoming a participant” and knowledge is associated with “belonging, participating, communicating” (Sfard, 1998, p.7).

The “*participation*” metaphor has been gaining ground in educational discourse. Its influence transpires through such terms as the “cooperative learning”, “learning community”, learning as “participation in social practices” (Lave, & Wenger, 1991) and learning as collective “knowledge creation” (Paavola, & Hakkarainen, 2005). Although the “*participation*” metaphor may appear a more promising vector for future discourse on educational practice, scholars and educators should avoid over-relying on a single metaphor. Rather, metaphors should serve as a tool for “local sense-making” (Sfard, 1998, p.12) that helps educators to capture the classroom reality.

In literature on language pedagogy, both “*acquisition*” and “*participation*” metaphors are prominent. For example, the term “Second Language Acquisition” is in itself evidence of the tenacity of the “*acquisition*” metaphor for learning. The “*participation*” metaphor announces its presence in the term “communicative approach to language teaching”. This approach emphasises the promotion of “interaction between language learners and their environment” (Nattinger, 1984, p.391) and building “a community of learners” for the purpose of achieving linguistic competence (Oxford et al., 1998, p. 44).

As this review of literature shows, metaphors have been indispensable for framing educational philosophies and theories on human cognition. However, very little input has been sought from those who matter most – the learners. This is despite a fact that

“the first order of reality in the classroom is the students’ point of view” (Paley, 1986, p.127). To address this gap in research literature, the present study examines student-produced images about language learning.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

The whole class consisting of 22 students participated in this study. They majored in various academic disciplines (e.g., sciences, engineering, psychology, economics) and were between 21 to 23 years old.

### *Instrument and Procedure*

A focused strategy of primary data collection (Erickson, 1977) was used in this study. The participants were asked to complete the sentence “Learning the Russian language has been like...” with their own metaphors and to provide a short explanation of the images. A similar method of soliciting metaphors through sentence completion was adopted by Cortazzi and Jin (1999), Marchant (1992), McGrath (2006), Zapata and Lacorte (2007).

Before photocopied forms with the incomplete sentence were distributed to the students the instructor asked them whether they knew what metaphor is. Initially, the students looked uncertain but after a short explanation they had no difficulty to produce their own metaphorical expressions. While illustrating the use of metaphors the instructor avoided any examples related to learning or studying in order not to influence the students’ thinking and the ensuing metaphors. The students were asked to write their metaphors at home. Despite the fact that participation was on a voluntary basis the students were keen to take part in the study and all of them returned the forms with their metaphors to the instructor.

### *Data Analysis*

The interpretative approach to data analysis was applied because the current study was based on the premise that individual interpretation of shared experiences is subjective and rooted in socio-cultural contexts (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Erickson, 1986). Social constructivist assumptions provided a point of reference throughout the data analysis process. Besides, the data analysis was done with the view that metaphor interpretation is as much a psychological process as it is linguistic (Miller, 1979).

The students’ metaphors and their explanations were typed verbatim. The recurring themes or connotations imbedded in the metaphors were identified and the images were categorised into several groups. Richards’ (1936) notion of the “ground” was important during the analysis because the conceptual meaning of a metaphor is inferred by analyzing the “ground”. The “ground” connects the two parts of a metaphor – the “tenor” and the “vehicle” – and establishes the relationship between them. The analysis of the “ground” of each of the metaphorical expressions helped infer the deeper meaning of the metaphor and determined its placement along the “*acquisition-participation*” continuum.

## Results

The participants generated 23 metaphorical images about learning the Russian language. These images were divided into four categories, namely, (1) metaphors that described learning in terms of a “journey”, “travel” or “movement” from one place to another; (2) metaphors that compared learning to various types of a “solitary experience”; (3) metaphors that linked language learning to more familiar kinds of learning experiences; and (4) metaphors that described learning in terms of “communicating”.

In the first category, seven images compared learning Russian to a “journey”. For example, some students stated that this particular learning experience was like

... travelling. *We never know what we will see at the next station. Even if we know about the new places and their culture we can still discover something new.*

... a journey. *It never ends till we die.*

... climbing a mountain. *Once we reach the peak, we are satisfied, but if we fall we are seriously injured. As long as we are dedicated we will reach the top. Anyway, it's a wonderful journey.*

... climbing an endless flight of stairs. *The more you learn, the more exhausted you are, the more you realise that the quest is not an easy feat.*

... Alice falling into the rabbit hole. *We keep wondering what will happen next and we never know how it will end.*

... playing roller-coaster. *It's full of fun and challenges.*

... coconut floating in the sea. *It makes its journey from one shore to another.*

In the journey-related images allusions to moving from one place to another and to advancement are important aspects. What transpired in the course of the analysis is that the journey-related metaphors described learning as a self-centred experience where the ‘travellers’ focused on their own intents and emotions. Though some of the explanations referred to “we” (e.g., “*We never know what we will see at the next station*”, “*We keep wondering what will happen next*”) the metaphors did not allude to collaborative activities or a mediated action on the part of the whole group. Furthermore, in these metaphors learning was about attaining something; this could be new knowledge, a new emotional state or the destination itself. This finding supports Sfard’s (1998) suggestion that “there are many types of entities that may be acquired in the process of learning” (p.5). Due to these specific characteristics, the journey-related metaphors aligned with the “*learning is acquisition*” metaphor.

In the second category, several metaphors described learning as a solitary experience; they had no indication of the presence of social ‘others’. These images compared learning Russian to

... eating an orange. *It can be sour or sweet.*

... eating unfamiliar food; *it can be difficult to imagine the food's flavour until you have actually tasted the dish.*

... cooking stew, which needs various ingredients, such as grammar and vocabulary.

... being an ant. We need to work hard and we need strong commitment.

... mining gold from day to night. It is so difficult and it requires a lot of energy to master the language.

... having a battle in the war. Russian is a tough language to learn.

Several of these metaphors indicated that knowledge has to be ingested, which is a form of appropriation; these metaphors belong to the “learning is acquisition” domain. The images that defined language learning in terms of mining for gold or fighting a battle also aligned with the “acquisition” metaphor. The former linked learning with working hard in order to obtain something very precious. The latter metaphor expressed the perception that learning is about either “gaining” victory or “losing” the battle.

The metaphors in the third category compared learning Russian to more familiar learning experiences. These images are in tune with a cognitive constructivist assumption that people acquire new knowledge through establishing parallels between the new phenomena and something they already know. For example, some students compared language learning to

... learning to drive. Before we know how to drive we need someone to guide us. To be a good driver we must practice a lot.

... learning how to ride a bicycle. If you have talent you can learn easily. If you fall you can be badly injured. When you have finally mastered it you can do tricks to amaze people, you can even teach other people how to do it.

... being a kid who learns proper behaviour. We must have solid basics.

... being a child learning to talk.

These metaphors indicated awareness that learning is a social act. Some of the images highlighted the presence of other people as an important element in the learning process. Even the metaphors which did not contain direct references to social ‘others’ revealed that the knowledge or skills one received in the process of learning had a social value. Despite these connotations, the metaphors in this cluster could not be put in the “participation” domain because they did not contain overt references to participating and communicating in the process of language learning. These images described learning as a socially useful but essentially self-centred process and, thus, they aligned with the “acquisition” metaphor.

Finally, several metaphors provided by the students described learning Russian in terms of developing bonds between the individual and other people, which is the fundamental characteristic of the “participation” metaphor. For example, some students wrote that learning Russian was akin to

... a starting point for communicating with others. Without communication we are lonely.

... befriending a stranger. If the person is nice we want to know more about him.

... trying to understand women. Sometimes it’s simple, sometimes it’s complicated. Frustrating.

... doing as the Romans do even if you are not Roman yourself. The language shows cultural difference between nations. When we learn a new language we learn and adopt a different culture.

In some of these images a psychological need for involvement and engagement with other people was conveyed very clearly. One metaphor indicated the student's good understanding of the complexities embedded in human communication (i.e., "*Sometimes it's simple, sometimes it's complicated*"). More importantly, there was a realisation that learning involves adapting to the prevailing cultural practices and becoming "a part of a greater entity" (Sfard, 1998, p.6). This is especially evident in the metaphor that compared learning to "*doing as the Romans do*". Pedagogical implications of these findings are discussed in the following section.

## Discussion and Pedagogical Implications

The present study revealed that the students' images about learning a foreign language supported both the established "*learning is acquisition*" and the emerging "*learning is participation*" educational metaphors. However, for the majority of the participants learning was associated with *acquisition* of knowledge rather than with *participation* in a social activity. Interestingly, seven out of the total twenty-three metaphors provided by the students were journey-related. Previous studies have shown that comparing learning to a journey or travelling is one of the oldest and most widely employed educational metaphors (Caballero, 2006; Hunt, 1976). A fact that not only Western but also Malaysian students use this metaphor points to universal appeal and applicability of this image. This indicates that people from various cultural backgrounds perceive education and learning as a 'rite of passage'. Due to its universal appeal, the "*learning is a journey*" metaphor can offer a platform for the teacher and the students to define the meaning of the shared educational experiences.

Based on the findings, we suggest that the metaphor "*learning is a shared journey*" could be a suitable platform to reconstruct the classroom reality. This does not mean that teachers and students should all have a uniform opinion about learning. Rather, the metaphor could be considered as one among many other possible options. This is because the image of a shared journey provides the learners a point of departure from which to begin their educational quest with all its tribulations and thrills. It also indicates connectedness with one's 'fellow travellers', including the teacher, and implies the existence of a community to provide social support on one's learning route. To language educators the "*shared journey*" metaphor with its emphasis on progress, involvement and participation offers support for practicing advanced pedagogy based on social constructivist assumptions. Besides, this metaphor fits well into the unique situation of the foreign language classroom where images of the target language country and native speakers are ubiquitous in the textbooks, videos and other teaching materials. All of this is conducive to perceiving language learning as an intellectual journey into a foreign land.

More importantly, the “*learning is a shared journey*” metaphor is able to accommodate both the “*participation*” and the “*acquisition*” metaphors, which means it can incorporate the teacher’s and the students’ educational agendas. This is because the prevailing approach in language pedagogy – communicative language teaching – places emphasis on developing the learners’ communication skills and on encouraging their engagement, involvement and participation (Nunan, & Lamb, 1996). Encouragingly, some metaphors produced by the students in this study indicated a clear realization that learning a foreign language involves not only discovering previously unknown social practices and cultural norms but also being able to adopt them. At the same time, learning must happen on an “individual plane” through the process of ingesting and absorbing new knowledge and experiences and making them “the learner’s private property” (Sfard, 1998, p.6). The majority of the students’ metaphors supported the view of learning as “acquisition” of knowledge, experience and skills. The “*shared journey*” metaphor is able to accommodate this perception because a journey undertaken together as a group of people does not preclude individual intellectual enrichment. Gaining knowledge and a better understanding of the target language country, culture and people is an important outcome of any foreign language programme.

To conclude, metaphors we use to describe our everyday actions, emotions and experiences can influence our behaviour. In a community of teachers and learners we create not only our own professional or educational reality but also that of the significant social ‘others’. Verbalizing and sharing the perceptions of this reality through the medium of metaphors offer a unique possibility for educators and students to attain a new vantage point, to re-evaluate our previous conceptions of the educational practice and to construct a new social reality based on the fresh insights thus gained. Perhaps in future we should ask ourselves questions such as these when we meet in the classroom: “What will our journey be like today?” and “Are we here for work or a most glorious kind of play?”

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# Živopisni pogled u malu učionicu na velikom sveučilištu: uz pomoć metafore

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## Sažetak

*U literaturi o istraživanjima u odgoju i obrazovanju postoje dvije utjecajne metafore o učenju, prema kojima se učenje opisuje ili kao „usvajanje” ili kao „sudjelovanje” (Sfard, 1998). Njima se uvelike koriste znanstvenici, istraživači i pedagozi, ali je slika o učenju iz perspektive učenika nedovoljno istraživana. Ovaj se rad bavi upravo tim nedostatkom u literaturi te razmatra metafore o učenju koje je oblikovala skupina polaznika nastave stranog jezika na jednom velikom sveučilištu u Maleziji. Rezultati ukazuju na univerzalnost predodžbi o učenju i otkrivaju postojanje obje metafore u stajalištima učenika. Istraživanje uzima u obzir njihove implikacije u nastavi jezika.*

**Ključne riječi:** *metafore koje su proizveli učenici; metafore u nastavi; nastava stranog jezika.*

*„Posao?” upitao me jednom, zapanjen,  
kada sam našu nastavu tako nazvao.*

*„Mislite li stvarno da je ovo što mi radimo posao?”*

*„Kako bih drugačije to nazvao?”*

*„Ja bih to nazvao najsjajnijom vrstom igre.”*

*Donna Tartt „Tajna povijest”*

## Uvod

Spomenuti je razgovor vođen između učenika starogrčkog jezika i njegova učitelja, a oslikava sveprisutne metafore u našem govoru. Ukazuje također na činjenicu da metafore koje ljudi upotrebljavaju da bi opisali neko zajedničko iskustvo, mogu biti itekako različite. U ovom razgovoru učenik vidi aktivnosti u razredu kao „posao”, a učitelj ih definira kao „najsajnijiju vrstu igre”.

Metafore su široko zastupljene u ljudskom jeziku. Ne samo da su sastavni dio našeg mišljenja, nego upravljaju našim postupcima (Lakoff i Johnson, 1980; Richards, 1936).

Budući da su „važni spoznajni i komunikacijski alati” (Ortony i Fainsilber, 1989, str. 181), znatno se koriste u nastavnom diskursu i istraživanju (Kliebard, 1982; Peters, 1973). U kontekstu poučavanja jezika prijašnja su se istraživanja bavila metaforama u jezičnom kurikulu (Herron, 1982; Nattinger, 1984) ili su bila usredotočena na percepcije koje učitelj ima o svojoj profesionalnoj praksi (de Guerrero i Vilamil, 2001; Zapata i Lacorte, 2007). Unatoč činjenici da su učenici u središtu svake nastavne aktivnosti, nedostaju istraživanja usmjerena metaforama koje oni proizvode (npr. Bozlk, 2002; Levine, 2005; Nikitina i Furuoka, 2011; Swales, 1994).

Važno je istraživati učenikove metafore o učenju zato što one čine njegove predodžbe o tom složenom kognitivnom procesu „očitim” i usporedivim sa stajalištima učitelja o odgojno-obrazovnoj praksi (Thomas, 2006, str.106). Uvid u ono što učenici misle o učenju, daje učiteljima podlogu za pregovaranje o uzajamno prihvatljivom značenju zajedničkog nastavnog iskustva. To je osobito bitno za one učitelje koji su uvjereni da njihova misija ne obuhvaća samo pružanje znanja o određenom predmetu nego i stvaranje „učehih zajednica u dijalogu”, zajedno s učenicima (Willison i Taylor, 2006, str.26).

Istraživanje opisano u ovom radu može pridonijeti postojećem znanju ponajprije zato što se odnosi na metafore o učenju koje stvaraju učenici, a zatim zato što je provedeno u jednom manje istraženom odgojno-obrazovnom kontekstu izvan zapadnog kruga, kao što je malezijski. S obzirom na činjenicu da su iskustva učenja vrlo ovisna o kontekstu (Hager i Halliday, 2009), moglo bi biti korisno provjeriti imaju li metafore o učenju univerzalnu vrijednost i jesu li primjenjive u različitim nastavnim sredinama. U središtu je opisanog istraživanja skupina malezijskih učenika ruskog jezika. Njihove su predodžbe analizirane s pomoću dviju utjecajnih metafora o učenju, a to su „*učenje je usvajanje*” i „*učenje je sudjelovanje*”. Istraživanje je provedeno na etnografski način, a jedan od istraživača bio je nastavnik.

## **Pregled literature**

Jedan od prvih poznatih primjera metafore o učenju nalazimo u Platonovu *Teetetu*, u kojem Platon opisuje učenje kao „djetetovo rođenje” (vidi Hager i Halliday, 2009). Prema Sfordovoj tvrdnji (1998), danas dvije glavne metafore u području odgoja i obrazovanja određuju učenje ili kao „usvajanje” ili kao „sudjelovanje”, što odražava dva različita pristupa ljudskoj spoznaji koja zastupaju različite škole unutar kognitivne psihologije (Sfard, 1998). Metafora o „*učenju kao usvajanju*” epistemološki je bliska teorijama nastalim zahvaljujući biheviorističkom pokretu u psihologiji. S biheviorističkog stajališta učenje se promatra kao pasivna reakcija na senzorni poticaj, drugim riječima učenje je rezultat neuronskog procesa u kojemu ni nastojanja pojedinca ni društvena suradnja nemaju važnu ulogu (Greeno, Collins i Resnik, 1996). Metafora o „usvajanju” također ima uporište u kognitivno-konstruktivističkim pretpostavkama koje novo znanje vide kao rezultat transformacije starih spoznaja u one nove (Greeno, Collins, i Resnik, 1996). Međutim, u odnosu na biheviorističko

tumačenje učenja, kognitivni konstruktivizam priznaje aktivno sudjelovanje pojedinca u toj „aktivnosti strukturiranja” (Piaget, 1980, str. 23).

Sfard (1998) ističe da je metafora o „usvajanju” tako duboko ukorijenjena u našoj kolektivnoj svijesti da se jezik istraživanja u području odgoja i obrazovanja okreće oko nje. Uvriježeno je, primjerice, opisivati učenje koristeći se pojmovima kao što su: „akumulacija”, „transmisija”, „prijenos”, „zadržavanje” itd. (Sfard, 1998, str. 5). Čak se i učenici pridržavaju takve predodžbe kada opisuju sami sebe kao „one koji upijaju informacije” (Bozlk, 2002). Metafora o „usvajanju” postavlja individualno obogaćenje kao cilj, čin učenja postaje „stjecanje određene robe”, a znati nije moguće razlikovati od „imati” ili „posjedovati”.

Za razliku od takvih koncepcija o učenju, metafora prema kojoj „učenje predstavlja sudjelovanje” ima korijene u „teoriji posredovanja” koju je razvio ruski psiholog Lav Vigotski (1978; 1981). On je tvrdio da se učenje ostvaruje aktivnim sudjelovanjem pojedinca u suradničkim aktivnostima i da se ljudska spoznaja razvija u interakciji mentalnih procesa i povijesnog, institucionalnog i kulturnog okruženja, ali i s „ostalima” u društvu (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Zapravo, metafora o „sudjelovanju” kao cilj učenja postavlja „izgrađivanje zajednice”, učiti pritom znači „postati sudionikom”, dok se znanje povezuje s „pripadanjem, sudjelovanjem, komuniciranjem” (Sfard, 1998, str. 7).

U novije vrijeme metafora o „sudjelovanju” stječe podlogu u nastavnom diskursu. Njezin se utjecaj očituje zahvaljujući upotrebi pojmova kao što su „suradničko učenje”, „učeca zajednica”, učenje kao „sudjelovanje u društvenim praksama” (Lave i Wenger, 1991) i učenje kao kolektivno „kreiranje znanja” (Paavola i Hakkarainen, 2005). Premda metafora o „sudjelovanju” možda još više obećava kada je riječ o budućem diskursu koji se odnosi na odgojno-obrazovnu praksu, učitelji i odgajatelji trebali bi izbjegavati pretjerano posezanje za samo jednom metaforom. Metafore bi radije trebale služiti kao alati za „stvaranje smisla na lokalnoj razini” (Sfard, 1998, str. 12) i tako pomoći pedagozima da obuhvate učioničku stvarnost.

U literaturi o nastavi jezika obje su metafore važne. Pojam kao što je „usvajanje drugog jezika” sam je po sebi dokaz ustrajnosti na metafori o učenju kao „usvajanju”. Druga se metafora prepoznaje u pojmu „komunikacijski pristup učenju jezika” jer upravo on naglašava promidžbu „interakcije između onih koji uče jezik i njihova okruženja” (Nattinger, 1984, str. 391) i izgradnju „zajednice učenika” s ciljem postizanja jezične kompetencije (Oxford i sur., 1998, str. 44).

Kao što se iz literature zaključuje, metafore su prijeko potrebne za utvrđivanje filozofskih pristupa odgoju i obrazovanju i teorija o ljudskoj spoznaji. No, u tom se smislu vrlo malo traži od onih koji su najvažniji – učenika, pa i unatoč činjenici da se „prva stvarnost u učionici odnosi na učenikova stajališta” (Paley, 1986, str. 127). Da bi se prevladao taj nedostatak u istraživačkoj literaturi, opisano se istraživanje bavi predodžbama koje učenici stvaraju o učenju jezika.

## **Metoda**

### ***Ispitanici***

U istraživanju je sudjelovao jedan razred s 22 učenika (u dobi od 21 do 23 godine) iz različitih područja (npr. znanost, inženjerstvo, psihologija, ekonomija).

### ***Instrumenti i postupak***

U istraživanju je upotrijebljena strategija fokusiranog prikupljanja primarnih podataka (Erickson, 1977). Od ispitanika se tražilo da dovrše rečenicu „Učiti ruski jezik bilo je kao ...” uz pomoć vlastitih metafora i da ukratko objasne svoje predodžbe. Sličnom metodom prikupljanja metafora dovršavanjem rečenice koristili su se Cortazzi i Jin (1999), Marchant (1992), McGrath (2006), Zapata i Lacorte (2007).

Prije nego što su dobili preslike zadatka s nedovršenom rečenicom, ispitanici su upitani znaju li što je metafora. U početku su bili nesigurni, ali, nakon što su saslušali kratko objašnjenje, bez problema su sami proizveli metafore. Primjeri metafora koje su dobili kao ilustraciju nisu sadržavali koncept učenja kako se ne bi utjecalo na njihovo razmišljanje i predlaganje metafora. Osim toga, zamoljeni su da svoje metafore zabilježe kod kuće. Unatoč činjenici da je istraživanje bilo dobrovoljnog karaktera, ispitanici su rado u njemu sudjelovali, pa su svi predali svoje zadatke s metaforama.

### ***Analiza podataka***

Primijenjen je interpretativni pristup analizi podataka jer se ovo istraživanje temeljilo na premisi kako je individualno tumačenje zajedničkih iskustava subjektivne prirode i ukorijenjeno u društveno-kulturne kontekste (Cohen, Manion, i Morrison, 2007; Erickson, 1986). Referentnu točku za prikupljanje podataka nalazimo u društveno-konstruktivističkim pretpostavkama. Podaci su analizirani polazeći također od stajališta da tumačenje metafore predstavlja podjednako psihološki i lingvistički proces (Miller, 1979).

Metafore koje su ispitanici predlagali i njihova objašnjenja pretipkani su doslovno (riječ po riječ). Utvrđene su ponavljajuće teme ili konotacije ukorijenjene u tim metaforama, dok su predodžbe kategorizirane po skupinama. Tijekom analize uzeta je u razmatranje Richardova (1936) zamisao o „podlozi” jer se konceptualno značenje neke metafore izvodi iz analize „podloge”. „Podloga” pak povezuje dva dijela metafore – „sadržaj” i „prijenosnik”. Analiza „podloge” za svaku metaforu pomogla je pri izvođenju zaključaka o njezinu dubljem značenju te ukazala na njezin položaju u odnosu na relaciju „usvajanje – sudjelovanje”.

## **Rezultati**

Ispitanici su predložili 23 metaforičke predodžbe o učenju ruskog jezika, koje su zatim podijeljene u sljedeće četiri kategorije: (1) metafore koje opisuju učenje u smislu „puta”, „putovanja” ili „pokreta” s jednog mjesta na drugo; (2) metafore koje uspoređuju učenje s različitim vrstama „samotnog iskustva”; (3) metafore koje

povezuju učenje jezika s poznatijim iskustvima učenja; i (4) metafore koje opisuju učenje kao „komuniciranje”.

U prvoj kategoriji sedam je predodžbi o učenju ruskog jezika koje se može usporediti s „putom/putovanjem”. Neki su ispitanici, primjerice, navodili da su njihova iskustva učenja kao:

... *putovanje. Nikad ne znamo što ćemo vidjeti na sljedećoj stanici. Čak i kada su nam poznata nova mjesta i njihove kulture, još uvijek otkrivamo nešto novo.*

... *put. Nema mu kraja dok ne umremo.*

... *planinarenje. Jednom kada stignemo na vrh zadovoljni smo, ali ozbiljno se ozlijedimo ako padnemo. Dok smo tome posvećeni, stići ćemo na vrh. Ipak, riječ je o lijepom putu.*

... *penjanje beskonačnim nizom stepenica. Što više učiš, to si iscrpljeniji, više shvaćaš da ta potraga uopće nije lagan pothvat.*

... *Alica koja pada u zečju rupu. Stalno se pitamo što će se sljedeće dogoditi i nikada ne znamo kako će završiti.*

... *igranje na toboganu. Puno zabave i izazova.*

... *kokos koji pluta u moru. Putuje s jedne obale na drugu.*

Kada je riječ o metaforama koje se odnose na put, aluzije na kretanje s jednog mjesta na drugo i napredovanje dva su važna aspekta. Tijekom analize pokazalo se da metafore o putovanju opisuju učenje kao samotno iskustvo za vrijeme kojeg su „putnici” usredotočeni na svoje osobne interese i emocije. Premda u nekim primjerima nalazimo zamjenicu „mi” (npr. *Nikada ne znamo što ćemo vidjeti na sljedećoj stanici. Stalno se pitamo što će se sljedeće dogoditi.*), te se metafore ne odnose na suradničke aktivnosti ili aktivnost posredovanu od skupine u cjelini. U njima učenje, štoviše, podrazumijeva *doći do nečega*: možda novog znanja, novog emocionalnog stanja ili samog odredišta. To ide u prilog Sfardovu (1998) prijedlogu da „postoji mnogo vrsta entiteta koji se mogu usvojiti u procesu učenja” (str. 5). Zahvaljujući tim specifičnim obilježjima, metafore koje podrazumijevaju put(ovanje) u skladu su s metaforom prema kojoj „učenje predstavlja usvajanje”.

U drugoj kategoriji nekoliko metafora određuje učenje kao samotno iskustvo; njima se ne ukazuje na bilo kakvu nazočnost „ostalih” u društvu. Takve predodžbe uspoređuju učenje ruskog jezika s:

... *jedenjem naranče. Može biti kiselo ili slatko.*

... *jedenjem nepoznate hrane; možda je teško zamisliti okus hrane sve dok je zapravo ne okusite.*

... *kuhanjem variva, što zahtijeva razne sastojke poput gramatike i rječnika.*

... *mravljom egzistencijom. Trebamo naporno raditi i snažno se tome posvetiti.*

... *kopanjem zlata dan i noć. Tako je teško i zahtijeva puno energije da bi se ovladalo jezikom.*

... *vođenjem bitke u ratu. Ruski je težak jezik za učenje.*

Nekolicina tih metafora ukazuje na to da se znanje mora uzeti/apsorbirati, što je neki oblik prisvajanja; one pripadaju domeni „učenje je usvajanje”. Predodžbe prema

kojima je učenje jezika definirano pojmovima kao što su kopanje zlata ili vođenje bitke također su u skladu s tom metaforom. Prva povezuje učenje s napornim radom da bi se dobilo nešto dragocjeno, dok druga predočava učenje kao „osvajanje pobjede” ili „gubljenje bitke”.

Metafore u trećoj kategoriji uspoređuju učenje ruskog jezika s poznatijim iskustvima učenja. Takve predodžbe odgovaraju kognitivno-konstruktivističkoj pretpostavci o tome da ljudi usvajaju novo znanje povlačeći paralele između novih pojava i onoga što već znaju. Tako su neki ispitanici usporedili učenje jezika s:

*... učenjem vožnje. Prije nego što naučimo kako voziti, potreban nam je netko tko će nas voditi. Da bismo bili dobar vozač, moramo mnogo vježbati.*

*... učenjem vožnje na biciklu. Ako si talentiran, možeš lako naučiti. Ako padneš, možeš se ozbiljno ozlijediti. Kad napokon naučiš, možeš izvoditi trikove da bi zabavio ljude, možeš ih čak tome poučiti.*

*... sudbinom djeteta koje se poučava pravilnom ponašanju. Moramo imati čvrstu osnovu.*

*... djetetom koje uči govoriti.*

Te metafore ukazuju na svjesnost o učenju kao društvenom činu. Neke od predodžbi podcrtavaju nazočnost drugih ljudi kao važan element u procesu učenja. Čak i one metafore koje se izravno ne odnose na „ostale” u društvu otkrivaju da znanje i vještine do kojih dolazimo u procesu učenja imaju društvenu vrijednost. Unatoč tim konotacijama metafore u navedenoj kategoriji ne mogu biti u sklopu domene „sudjelovanje” jer se ne pozivaju otvoreno na sudjelovanje i komuniciranje u procesu učenja jezika. Takve predodžbe opisuju učenje kao društveno koristan, ali u osnovi samotnan proces, pa su u skladu s metaforom o „usvajanju”.

Na kraju, nekoliko metafora koje su ih ispitanici naveli opisuje učenje ruskog jezika kao razvijanje povezanosti pojedinca s drugim ljudima, što je temeljno obilježje metafore o „sudjelovanju”. Neki od njih su, primjerice, napisali da je učenje ruskog jezika srodno:

*... početnoj točki komunikacije s drugima. Bez komunikacije smo usamljeni.*

*... sklapanju prijateljstva sa strancem. Ako je osoba draga, želimo saznati nešto više o njoj.*

*... nastojanju da shvatimo žene. Nekad je jednostavno, nekad komplicirano. Frustrirajuće.*

*... ponašanju Rimljana, čak i kada sam nisi Rimljanin. Jezik pokazuje kulturne razlike među narodima. Kad učimo neki novi jezik, spoznajemo i usvajamo drugačiju kulturu.*

U nekima je od tih predodžbi uočljiva psihološka potreba za uključivanjem drugih i zajedničkom aktivnošću s njima. Jedna je metafora dobro pokazala shvaćanje o komplikacijama ukorijenjenima u ljudskoj komunikaciji (npr. *Nekad je jednostavno, nekad je komplicirano.*), a još je važnije da postoji shvaćanje kako učenje podrazumijeva prilagođavanje prevladavajućim kulturnim praksama i postaje „dio jednog većeg



entiteta” (Sfard, 1998, str. 6). To se osobito vidi u metafori koja učenje uspoređuje s „*ponašanjem Rimljana*”. U nastavku se rada raspravlja o pedagoškim implikacijama predstavljenih rezultata.

## Rasprava i pedagoške implikacije

Opisano istraživanje pokazuje da predodžbe koje ispitanici imaju o učenju stranog jezika idu u prilog već poznatoj metafori i onoj koja tek izlazi na vidjelo u nastavnoj domeni – „*učenje je usvajanje*” i „*učenje je sudjelovanje*”. No, većina ispitanika učenje prije povezuje s *usvajanjem* znanja nego sa *sudjelovanjem* u nekoj društvenoj aktivnosti. Zanimljivo je kako je sedam od ukupno 23 predložene metafore povezano s putovanjem. Prijašnja su istraživanja potvrdila da je usporedba učenja s putem ili putovanjem jedna od najstarijih i najčešće upotrebljivanih odgojno-obrazovnih metafora (Caballero, 2006; Hunt, 1976). Činjenica da se, kao i učenici na Zapadu, njome koriste učenici u Maleziji, ukazuje na njezinu univerzalnost i primjenjivost, što pokazuje da ljudi iz različitih kulturnih sredina promatraju obrazovanje i učenje kao „obred zrelosti”. Zahvaljujući svojoj univerzalnosti, metafora o tome kako „*učenje predstavlja put/ovanje*” može biti dobra podloga i učitelju i učeniku za određivanje značenja zajedničkih nastavnih iskustava.

Polazeći od naših rezultata, predložimo metaforu prema kojoj „*učenje znači zajedničko putovanje*” kao odgovarajuću osnovu za rekonstrukciju razredne stvarnosti. To ne znači da bi učitelj i učenici trebali imati jedinstveno mišljenje o učenju, nego da bi se takva metafora mogla smatrati jednom od mnogih koje su moguće, jer predodžba o zajedničkom putovanju učeniku pruža uporište iz kojega počinje nastavna potraga sa svim problemima i uzbuđenjima. Ukazuje također na povezanost sa „suputnicima”, kojima pripada i učitelj, te podrazumijeva postojanje zajednice koja će omogućiti društvenu podršku na putu učenja. Onima koji poučavaju jezik metafora o „zajedničkom putovanju” s naglaskom na napretku, uključenosti i sudjelovanju pruža potporu za daljnje poučavanje na temeljima društveno-konstruktivističkih pretpostavki. Osim toga, dobro se uklapa u jedinstvenu učioničku situaciju u kojoj su predodžbe o zemlji ciljnog jezika i njezinim izvornim govornicima široko rasprostranjene po udžbenicima, video i ostalom nastavnom materijalu. Sve to pridonosi poistovjećivanju učenja jezika s intelektualnim putovanjem u stranu zemlju.

Još važnije, metafora prema kojoj „*učenje predstavlja zajedničko putovanje*” može odgovarati objema metaforama („*usvajanje*” i „*sudjelovanje*”), što znači da može povezati zadaće učitelja i učenika, jer dominantni pristup nastavi jezika – onaj komunikacijski – ističe razvoj učenikovih komunikacijskih vještina, potiče angažman, uključenost i sudjelovanje (Nunan i Lamb, 1996). Ono što ohrabruje jest to da neke metafore koje su ispitanici u ovom istraživanju predložili jasno pokazuju shvaćanje prema kojem učenje stranog jezika obuhvaća ne samo otkrivanje prethodno nepoznatih društvenih praksi i kulturnih normi nego i sposobnost prilagodbe njima. Učenje se istodobno mora dogoditi na „individualnom planu” u procesu preuzimanja

i apsorpcije novog znanja i iskustva, čineći ih „učenikovim privatnim vlasništvom” (Sfard, 1998, str. 6). Većina predloženih metafora podržava stajalište o učenju kao „usvajanju znanja, iskustva i vještina”, što odgovara metafori o „zajedničkom učenju”, jer putovanje koje poduzima skupina ljudi ne sprečava pojedinca da se intelektualno obogati. Bolji uvid i razumijevanje zemlje u kojoj se govori jezik-cilj, njezine kulture i stanovnika važan su ishod svakog programa stranog jezika.

Da zaključimo, metafore kojima se koristimo kako bismo opisali svakodnevne aktivnosti, emocije i iskustva mogu utjecati na naše ponašanje. U zajednici učitelja i učenika stvaramo ne samo našu vlastitu profesionalnu i nastavnu stvarnost već također i stvarnost onih „drugih”. Razgovarajući o zajedničkim predodžbama o toj istoj stvarnosti s pomoću metafora, učitelji i učenici dobivaju jedinstvenu mogućnost za ostvarivanje nove prednosti, ponovno vrednovanje prethodnih konceptualnih rješenja u području nastavne prakse te konstruiranje nove društvene stvarnosti na temeljima svježih spoznaja do kojih se na taj način dolazi. Možda bismo si ubuduće trebali postaviti sljedeća pitanja kada se nađemo u učionici: „Kakvo će nam biti današnje putovanje?” i „Jesmo li ovdje zbog posla ili najsajnije vrste igre?”