

The power of metaphor in thesis writing process

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Abstract

The article contributes to the discussion of writing at the master's level by investigating metaphors underlying the process of writing a master's thesis from the perspective of graduate students. The analysis focuses on the use of metaphors in semi-structured interviews conducted with graduate students who defended their thesis and reflected on the whole process. Their metaphor use is non-elicited and this rhetorical device is spontaneously used showing that thesis writers conceptualize their research and all it entails in metaphorical terms to a significant extent. Despite the fact that thesis writers themselves were not encouraged to pay attention to or use metaphorical language, their narratives reveal the interplay of metaphors when describing the writing process.

Key words: master's thesis; thesis writing; metaphor; metaphorical expressions.

1. Introduction

Up to the 20th century the notion of metaphor was viewed as a rhetorical trope restricted to literature and oratory. It is then that scholars recognised the use of metaphor in everyday language and started to combine this rhetorical phenomenon with the cognitive aspect of metaphor and acknowledged the presence of the metaphorical processes in human thought. Being fundamental to the majority of our cognitive activity, metaphors are extensively used in communication and discourse. Metaphors seem to affect the way we perceive, think and speak about certain topics and can be associated with a particular discourse to a significant extent. Metaphors seem to be indispensable in association with knowledge, communication and the mind. Therefore, they frequently pervade academic discourse of various actors in the field (teachers, students, etc.). When the actors report on their academic activities, it is expected that they resort to metaphor use. This yields the basic assumption of this paper that metaphorical expressions are used spontaneously in academic discourse including thesis writing. Bearing in mind

the importance of the activity of thesis writing, it is quite foreseeable that their narratives abound in metaphor use.

The pivotal work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) brought into focus the conceptual nature of metaphor. They claimed that the function of metaphor is not merely ornamental but conceptual and fundamental to the human interaction with the world. The appearance of metaphorical expressions in everyday language is a reflection of the cognitive processes occurring in the human mind (*ibid.*). As metaphor is a rhetorical device used unconsciously to describe one thing in terms of another, it enables disparate things to co-exist. Certain concepts and images emerge as a result of metaphorical thinking. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claim that metaphor is ubiquitous in language and used unconsciously in everyday language. They define conceptual metaphor as an abstract notion cognitively and linguistically related to more concrete and familiar concepts. These concepts are constructed by sets of mappings from a source domain (concrete) to a target domain (abstract). This paper goes in line with their claim that metaphor is ubiquitous in everyday language as the participants in their open-ended answers spontaneously produced many instances of metaphors without being consciously aware of it proving that metaphorical concepts are deeply rooted in human mind.

Review of the literature has shown that quite a large proportion of research over the past few decades contributed to an increased awareness of metaphor as a tool for shedding light on participants' conceptualisation in the language of education. In a paper of this length, it is impossible to present all the issues related to metaphors and writing. A vast majority of studies focus on the metaphorical conceptualization and interpretation of the notion of writing. Although the experience of writing a thesis through the lens of metaphors which students use to describe this activity seems to be of an increasing interest in the academia, it is evident that a large number of studies examine elicited metaphors whereas this paper attempts to provide a different perspective investigating metaphorical use of non-elicited metaphors in the discourse on thesis writing.

An undisputed element of any discussion on education is metaphor which helps us explain education concepts vividly. Its significance in explaining the education process is evident in a number of articles written by authors offering various perspectives. With the aim of extracting language repertoire employing metaphor, scholars applied two methodological approaches: metaphor elicitation (McGrath, 2006; Massengill Shaw & Mahlios, 2008; Seferoğlu et al., 2009; Paulson & Armstrong, 2011, Xu et al., 2020) and non-elicited or spontaneous use of metaphorical language (Lander, 2000; Northcote & Fetherston, 2006; Azdi, 2007; Kim & Danforth, 2012; Paulson & Kendall Theado; 2015; Pavičić Takač & Molnar, 2015). These articles investi-

gated the use of metaphors in educational context from the perspective of both teachers and students, probing into various issues of teaching and learning focusing on but not limited to instruction, supervision and literacy. The majority of aforementioned scholarly articles explored lower levels of education and to date tertiary levels seem to be underexplored. Only recently did the focus shift to metaphor as a linguistic and cognitive phenomenon as it was discussed in academic writing experiences of postgraduate students both at master's and doctorate level (Kelly, 2011; Aydin & Baysan, 2018; Hanić et al., 2018; Phyo et al., 2023). Due to this lack of information on the use of metaphors at the tertiary level, this paper focuses on master's level students' use of metaphors. More precisely, the aim of this paper is to investigate spontaneous language use in open-ended interviews in which the interviewees reflected on the process of thesis writing in its entirety.

2. Methodology

This paper gives an account of a part of a research project¹ aimed at probing the underlying experience of graduates who defended their thesis. Semi-structured interviews, which lasted around 60 minutes, were used for data collection. Three female participants took part in this study by recollecting their master's thesis writing experience. The participants came from different disciplines, namely humanities, social sciences and natural sciences and they defended their thesis maximum six weeks before the interviews took place. It is important to mention that, unlike many studies in which metaphors related to thesis writing were elicited from the participants, metaphors appeared as a side-effect in the data set collected for the abovementioned research project. We presume that this fact adds to the data quality of this paper as spontaneously produced metaphors more clearly reveal subconscious, real-life use of metaphorical language.

The raw data set was carefully examined and metaphorical expressions were extracted. Those specifically pertinent to the different stages of thesis writing process were selected for further analysis. Upon close inspection, the journey metaphor was singled out as a prevalent concept. Although the journey metaphor is often used as a facilitating tool for thesis writers, our data showed that thesis writers themselves perceived their writing in terms of a journey without being 'led to that path'. We explored the journey metaphor extensively in a separate article (cf. Hanić et al., 2018). We revisited the usage of metaphorical language in the interviews in an attempt to depart from the journey narrative genre as a dominant and expected concept in

¹ COST project – COST Action IS1401 (Strengthening Europeans' Capabilities by Establishing the European Literacy Network).

describing the thesis writing process. This paper focuses on other concepts and domains that emerged as less dominant but still bearing importance and adding to the picturesque language.

3. Analysis and discussion

The entire education is perceived through the prism of the journey metaphor with different elements of explorations, discoveries and progress, conceptualized as moving through stages. Writing can be conceptualized in a variety of ways but it is primarily conceptualized as a linear representation through the journey metaphor. The writing of a master's thesis is also perceived as a journey with different stages from the beginning to the end: starting off, moving along the path and finally reaching the destination. In simple words, this means going from point A to point B and when thesis writers complete one stage they move onto the next stage of the process.

In our earlier paper (2018), we addressed the existence of the journey metaphor as a core metaphor used when describing the thesis writing process. Although the journey metaphor seems to be indispensable in the discourse of tertiary education, some scholars acknowledge the existence and importance of other metaphors in writing (McCulloch, 2013) and understand them in terms of concepts other than linearity. This is particularly true for thesis writing as it is a complex process which entails certain activities that are at times haphazard and do not fit perfectly into the framework of journey.

Some metaphors are so deeply entrenched and common that they dominate the way of thinking and speaking and their use often goes unnoticed. However, meticulous inspection of the interview material unveiled a variety of metaphors to be discussed. The analysis of our data shows that other metaphors are also used dominantly or marginally depending on the interviewees' subjective use of language. While answering open-ended questions and describing different stages of the thesis writing process, the participants resort to a significant number of metaphorical expressions manifesting metaphors other than the journey metaphor, as journey is not the only common theme in organising metaphors for thesis writing.

In what follows, we examine metaphors spontaneously verbalized by the participants which we organized according to stages of writing they were used to describe. These stages include pre-writing (selecting a topic, reviewing the literature, and formulating hypotheses), writing, and post-writing (defence). The first two stages are the richest in terms of metaphorical language as the participants relied heavily on their linguistic and cognitive resources for verbalizing experience in these stages. The last stage described

was less productive in terms of metaphors as not much metaphorical language was registered.

3.1. *First meeting – Pre-writing*

The participants' spontaneous metaphor production reveals their understanding of the thesis writing process and different stages as well as obstacles they encounter and need to overcome. In their interviews, they acknowledge that the process entails more than the writing itself but refer to activities in the pre-writing as well as post-writing stage. When it comes to the pre-writing stage, the participants mainly talk about choosing a topic, reviewing literature, setting up hypotheses and while doing so they use different metaphorical expressions.

Selecting a topic is never an easy decision as several criteria need to be taken into consideration such as author's motivation for exploring a certain topic, manageable topic, relevance, academic merit, suitability for further research and so on. The participants refer to the topic as a relevant issue in the pre-writing stage by applying personification in expressions such as *susret s temom* ('a meeting with the topic') and *znati temu* ('knowing a topic'). Personification makes an abstraction such as topic more relatable if conceptualized as a person as illustrated by examples (1) and (2):

- (1) *da sam se susretala s tim tokom svog cijelog života* ('that I have been meeting with it my whole life')²
- (2) *radila sam temu koju apsolutno ne znam* ('I was working on a topic I absolutely do not know')

A very vivid and colourful extension of personification is example (3). Here, through the metaphor LIFE IS A THEATRE, one of the interviewees compared topic to an actor playing a significant role in that part of their life.

- (3) *da igra neku ulogu u mom životu* ('to play some role in my life')

As they continue with their narratives, the participants address another issue crucial in the pre-writing stage and that is literature review. Here we find another instance of personification. Interviewees view books, articles and literature in general as living beings possessing qualities attributed to people, namely their ability to talk, teach and provide assistance as evident from the following examples (4-7).

- (4) *susret s literaturom nije bio lagan* ('meeting with literature was not easy')

² The examples used in the analysis are just segments and not the entire sentences. As the participants' first language was the working language of the interviews, the authors provided direct translations of these segments. Direct translations were used so as to make the participants' usage of metaphorical language obvious.

- (5) *literatura mi je pomogla* ('literature helped me')
- (6) *seminarski radovi su me naučili da citiram* ('seminar papers taught me how to cite')
- (7) *knjige koje su pričale o tome* ('books that talked about it')

In their narratives, the participants use metaphorical language extensively when addressing the phase of reviewing literature, acknowledging the fact that it presents a major challenge for them. In order to select adequate sources for their thesis, they need to understand the academic literature and demonstrate certain amount of knowledge. Understanding and knowledge are the key domains discussed below.

Interviewees use metaphorical expressions underlying the KNOWING IS SEEING and UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING metaphors relying on vision as their "primary source of objective data about the world" (Sweetser, 1990: 39). In other words, they interpret objects and events in their thesis writing utilizing data collected via the sense of vision. The reason for this might be that people consider sensory experience as the basic human experience in which metaphors are grounded. Li (2013: 1241) stated that the metaphor of visual perception "is the main mechanism through which human beings comprehend abstract concepts and perform abstract reasoning." This conceptual metaphor is realized in the following metaphorical expressions:

- (8) *vidjela sam otprilike kako to treba da izgleda* ('I saw what that was supposed to look like')
- (9) *tek sam tad kad sam čitala tu literaturu vidjela koliko stvarno ne znam* ('only when I started reading the literature did I see how much knowledge I lack')

A visual term such as the verb *vidjeti* ('see') used in examples (8) and (9) does not refer to something that is detected literally by the eye but metaphorically represents an idea that is perceived by the mind. Thesis writers use such metaphorical expressions to talk about the process of learning and acquiring knowledge. The absence of vision in turn indicates the absence of abstract reasoning so the linguistic expression in example (10) is interpreted as the absence of knowing. In other words, not being aware of reality is not seeing reality.

- (10) *čitala sam onako naslijepo* ('I was reading blindly')

Metaphorical expressions used by the participants as a realization of the KNOWING IS SEEING metaphor are given in examples (11) and (12). The term 'vision', which literally means a visual representation, here stands for a mental representation of a concept of an idea.

- (11) *ja imam jednu viziju u glavi i ja sad hoću da nađem nešto što se poklapa s tom vizijom* ('I have a vision in my head and I want to find something that matches that vision')

- (12) *da steknem neku viziju šta ću ja to raditi* ('to acquire a vision of what I would be doing')

It is evident from these examples that there are systematic metaphorical relations between the physical source domain of sight and the abstract target domain of mind. These relations encompass the internal mental processes of thinking, understanding, reasoning, and knowing and correlate them with external human experiences. In close relation to this is the metaphorical meaning of the expression *prosvijetliti* ('enlighten') (example 13) which is the realization of metaphors KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT and IGNORANCE IS DARKNESS. Darkness prevents us from seeing things clearly while shedding light on something enhances our visual perception, which is metaphorically interpreted as gaining knowledge. In other words, anything that aids to vision is conceptualized as aids to gaining awareness.

- (13) *i, zahvaljujući određenim autorima, [...], to su jednostavno bile neke stvari gdje su me oni, mogu reći, prosvijetlili...* ('and thanks to certain authors, [...], those were simply some things in which they, I could say, enlightened me...')

The meaning of the verb *gledati* ('look at') contains the semantic element of intention to direct attention to something or someone (example 14). The act of looking at somebody or something literally refers to seeing by an eye and it metaphorically stands for mental and intellectual activities of thinking, making judgements and drawing conclusions. In other words, a significant part of understanding the objective world can be achieved by its careful observation.

- (14) *gledala kako su oni/ona nešto zaključivali* ('I was looking at how they/she drew some conclusions')

Following the extensive literature review and preliminary research, the logical next step is formulating proper and workable hypotheses. These serve as a formula to follow in the entire research and help writers lay the foundation for their master's thesis. The participants address the importance of properly constructing hypotheses in examples (15) and (16) below in which they clearly refer to a hypothesis as a construction i.e., a building, which is an instantiation of the THEORIES ARE BUILDING metaphor. Being abstract in nature, the knowledge about a certain topic needs to be structured in terms of something concrete (a building) for better comprehension. Therefore, acquiring knowledge and setting up hypotheses can be interpreted as constructing a building.

- (15) *hipoteze je jako važno dobro postaviti u nekom istraživanju* ('it is very important to properly construct hypotheses in a research')
- (16) *dobro postavljanje i zadataka i hipoteza* ('well-constructed tasks and hypotheses')

An endeavour such as a master's thesis requires coherence and logical organisation. For this reason, thesis writers pay special attention to linking every part of their thesis logically one to another. The statement given by one of the participants: *sve je to isprepleteno* ('all of that is intertwined') proves that they realize that all segments must be properly connected in order to make a coherent whole. From the use of this expression, it is clear that ideas are perceived as threads that are intertwined i.e., they are inextricably linked one to another. It is crucial for a master's thesis to be coherent which means that it has to be logically arranged and every part of it should be connected to the central idea of writing. The same concept of connecting and linking can be applied to ideas and knowledge as illustrated in the following examples:

(17) *ideje su se nadovezivale* ('ideas were adding up')

(18) *iskoristim to znanje u smislu da se na njega nadovežem* ('I use that knowledge in the sense to build on it')

(19) *sad ja to povezujem* ('now I am connecting it')

The verb *nadovezati* literally means to connect something by tying or to add one thing to another by tying it. However, in examples (17) and (18) the verb is used metaphorically portraying ideas as threads thus tying them together leads to further knowledge and understanding. The verb *povezati* (*to connect*) in example (19) also highlights the thesis writer's ability to associate one idea to another. The participants acknowledge that connecting various ideas enables them to see a broader picture. Understanding is here conceptualized as tying threads one to another and by doing so a coherent whole is formed. This concrete image is mapped onto the abstract domain of mental, intellectual activities, i.e., the domain of ideas and knowledge referred to in examples (17–19).

As a part of the interview that inquires about the pre-writing stage, one participant elaborates on the importance of training she received prior to her master studies. She uses the expression *trening* ('training') which refers primarily to a physical workout in preparation for sports achievements. This makes it evident that thesis writing is perceived as a sport, pointing to the amount of effort i.e., training invested in academic writing to successfully finalize the thesis. Therefore, the WRITING IS SPORT metaphor in example (20) emphasises the intensity and workload required to carry out such an endeavour.

(20) *žestok trening u akademskom pisanju* ('intense (physical) training in academic writing')

3.2 Producing a master's thesis - Writing

The analysis of the participants' language repertoire unveiled that they conceive of thesis writing as a production process and themselves as writers being responsible for the process itself. Expressions such as *proizvodnja*, *produkcija pisanja* ('production of writing') reflect their attitude towards this aspect of their thesis writing in metaphorical terms. They see reading as a prerequisite for production i.e., writing (example 21) and themselves, authors, as producers (example 22). In example (23), the focus shifts from a person to a day, attributing features of productivity to a period of time.

- (21) *nećete ništa proizvesti ako ne čitate* ('you will not produce anything unless you read')
- (22) *nisam uvijek bila jednako produktivna* ('I was not always equally productive')
- (23) *nisu svi dani bili jednako produktivni* ('not all the days were equally productive')

As a further elaboration of the metaphor WRITING IS PRODUCTION, the participants also recognise different periods of the production process with different levels of productivity, or the lack of it, which results in oscillations (*velike oscilacije*). They report on times/periods when they were productive and when they were not, referring to the fall of productivity (*pad produktivnosti*).

The participants are well aware of the effort needed for thesis writing and compare it to working on the field, which is evident from the expressions in examples (24) and (25) which employ the metaphor THESIS WRITING IS FARMING. The primary meaning of the noun field ('*polje*') is an area of land used for growing crops whereas its metaphorical extension refers to an area as a subject or an activity of a person's interest (SUBJECTS ARE AREAS). The agricultural facet is further brought in the focus with multiple references to farming used in relation to topic: *obraditi temu* ('cultivate/farm a topic').

- (24) *sam radila na jednom novom polju* ('I was working on a new field')
- (25) *to su bila totalno dva različita polja* ('those were totally two different fields')

The participants underscore the negative aspect of the thesis writing process in a very unusual and vivid manner as demonstrated in examples (26–28):

- (26) *ono što je negativno bilo jeste taj sam proces proizvodnje, produkcije pisanja čisto eto zbog toga što je to kao porođaj riječi, ne valja, ne može, ne mogu* ('what was negative was the very process of production, writing production simply because it is like giving birth to words, it's bad, it doesn't work, I can't')

From this example, it is evident that thesis writing is regarded as work involving great and often strenuous exertion. In example (26) writing is compared to a childbirth (giving birth) as an intense, exhausting, and physically demanding experience employing the WORDS ARE PEOPLE metaphor. The activity involving physical effort and exertion is mapped onto intellectual effort required for thesis writing which in turn entails various impediments mirrored in the expressions as the negative side of the whole experience.

One of the participants potentiates the fall of confidence (*pad samopouzdanja*). The interpretation of this expression reveals the underlying verticality schema as a result of a tendency to conceptualize success and confidence employing up-down orientation. This is further highlighted by the reference to crash/collapse in example (27) as the lowest point on a scale.

(27) *padovi samopouzdanja za mene, za mene, nažalost, uvijek bili veliki jedan krah* ('falls of confidence for me, have, unfortunately, always been one great crash')

Negative feelings are amplified with the reference to a nightmare as illustrated in example (28). By comparing thesis writing to a nightmare (the WRITING IS A NIGHTMARE metaphor), the thesis writer points out that writing itself encompasses a combination of emotions such as fear, anxiety, confusion, frustration, and even anger which are characteristic of a nightmare.

(28) *pisanje je noćna mora neviđena* ('writing is an unseen nightmare')

The production of thesis also generates positive emotions. In addition to the sense of accomplishment, confidence and importance, example (29) accentuates the sense of pride and honour on behalf of the thesis writer who sees oneself as a peacock seeking attention and admiration. Apart from employing the PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS metaphor, the thesis writer ascribes the importance to the work done by referring to it as God's work thus judging everybody else as inferior and oneself as superior to others.

(29) *to je bio zaista period kada sam se ja osjećala da ja to nešto radim i ja to nešto pišem i to je produktivno, i ja sam u biblioteci... ja sam... ja sam paun koji hoda onim radnim mjestom, [...] vi ste nevažni naspram onog višeg posla Božijeg kojeg ja obavljam* ('it was really a period when I felt I was doing something and I was writing something and it is productive, and I am at a library...I am... I am a peacock that walks around the workplace [...] you are insignificant compared to this superior work of God that I perform')

3.3. The bullseye - Post-writing

While describing the post-writing stage, the interviewees singled out defence as a special event and addressed the whole experience in retrospect.

The prominence is given to defence which is perceived as a culmination of the whole process, something that imparts splendour or finish (example 30). They describe it as a crown to top it all and compare it to a culminating event that makes the writing process complete or perfect by adding this final achievement to it (example 31).

- (30) [o odbrani] *kulminacija nekog sad pozitivnog rada* ('[with reference to defence] culmination of some positive work')
- (31) *opet na kraju odbrana, kruna svega* ('and in the end defence, the crown of it all')

When talking about thesis writing in retrospect, thesis writers reveal their awareness of the complexity of writing a master's thesis. They acknowledge that the process entails more than the writing itself which is evident in their perception of the amount of effort needed for it to be completed. In the following examples, the features of physical objects standing one behind the other are attributed to both thesis and work/effort invested in writing.

- (32) *iza svake [teze] stoji jedan solidan rad* ('behind every thesis stands solid effort/work')
- (33) *iza svake izvrsne teze stoji puno rada* ('behind every excellent thesis stands a lot of effort')

In addition to the abovementioned, the participants use metaphorical language to express their positive perception on thesis writing experience after finalizing the thesis. The satisfaction with their accomplishments is illustrated with the expression *pun pogodak* which primarily refers to a score made by hitting the centre of the target (in target shooting) or to a great win such as a jackpot in a game of chance as a realization of the WRITING IS A GAME.

Another interesting metaphor that emerged is A WRITER IS A RULER in which the thesis writer is perceived as a ruler governing topic, subject matter and thesis related technicalities. Examples (34) and (35) reveal thesis writers' confidence and contentment with certain aspects of their thesis as they feel as masters of their work.

- (34) *da sam vladala tom materijom* ('that I governed that subject matter')
- (35) *vladala i temom i tehničkim stvarima* ('[I] ruled both the topic and technicalities')

In addition to this, a writer is perceived as a plant in the following realization of the metaphor A WRITER IS A PLANT:

- (36) *divno pozitivno iskustvo iz kojeg izlazim sigurnija u sebe, zrelija* ('a wonderful positive experience out of which I come out more confident, more mature')

A parallel can be drawn between the ripeness of fruit and the physical or, in this case, mental maturity of humans in the adult age. As is evident in (36), reflection on the whole thesis writing experience is a positive one. The participants realized that the whole process changed them and that they came out of it as more confident and mature which is metaphorical reference to fruit achieving its full developmental and maturity stage.

4. Conclusion

When we speak of metaphor, we can say that we see one concept through the lens of another as it has the power to bring together two disparate concepts into relation. Conventional metaphorical expressions have a relatively fixed form but a highly specific semantics applicable in various types of discourse, including thesis writing. Metaphors help thesis writers understand or explain things that are otherwise difficult to describe as they bring together things that are unlikely to co-exist. This paper aimed at revealing the conceptual metaphors underlying the narrative of master's thesis writing experience. Through the interplay of metaphors, this narrative reveals several concepts and domains less dominant but equally important as the concept of journey which surfaced as the most prominent one with the reference to thesis writing (see Hanić et al., 2018). In a responsive dialogue, the participants reported on their experience, expectations and reflections of thesis writing process. From the interview data, many metaphorical expressions were extracted with the aim of analysing how thesis writers conceptualize the process of writing. A careful examination of non-elicited interview segments unravelled a number of conceptual metaphors other than the journey metaphor.

Concepts uncovered within the metaphor analysis process corroborate the initial assumption of the paper that metaphorical language is integral to conceiving and describing the thesis writing process which is divided into pre-writing, writing and post-writing stage. When reporting on the pre-writing stage, interviewees addressed the issues of selecting a topic, reviewing literature, formulating hypotheses and acquiring knowledge. In their talk, the participants generated a series of metaphorical expressions to personify these concepts. They also objectified concepts such as ideas and knowledge resorting to the metaphor of visual perception for abstract reasoning and understanding and the building metaphor for constructing hypotheses. In their descriptions of the writing stage, thesis writers perceived the writing process with reference to the thesis as a product i.e., the final result of the production process. In other words, they used production metaphor as a valuable tool in describing their thesis writing in everyday language. They further highlighted the effort needed for thesis writing by com-

paring it to a physically demanding and strenuous activity such as working in the field. Despite the amount of effort invested, the interviewees touched upon both positive and negative aspects of thesis writing experience using creative metaphors distinctly unique for each person. As for the post-writing stage, the prominence was given to defence but the participants also accentuated the overall satisfaction and positive perception of the entire experience.

Given the very complex nature of writing a master's thesis, it may be expected that metaphors are utilized abundantly and help us see this writing process through the eyes of thesis-writers. The creation of metaphor relies heavily on contextual factors and its use uncovers both collective and individual patterns of use. This explains why some metaphors and some expressions are more frequently used by a great number of speakers and why some are rather pertinent to individual use. Although metaphors were not elicited, the participants' answers to open-ended questions in interviews offered new perspectives on their emic experiences. From a relatively small corpus, a limited data set was extracted, which is the reason why generalisations and definite conclusions cannot be drawn without further research.

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