



AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CONCEPT OF LEARNING ESSAY WRITING AMONG SAUDI ENGLISH MAJORS THROUGH METAPHOR ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT



A large number of studies focusing on language teachers' and learners' understandings of teaching and/or learning have used metaphor analysis as their tool of enquiry, however, very few studies to date have begun to examine students' conceptualizations of specific language skills, such as academic writing through metaphor analysis. In the light of this, the present study set out to fill this lacuna by investigating the various perspectives of Saudi English majors about the concept of learning essay writing through metaphor analysis. To elicit learners' metaphors, 77 English majors studying at Qassim University were given a questionnaire that solicited their metaphors for the concept of learning essay writing. They completed a metaphor elicitation questionnaire with the prompt "Learning essay writing is like . . . because ..." by focusing on only one metaphor to indicate their conceptualization of learning essay writing. To triangulate the data collected by metaphor elicitation questionnaire, semi-structured interview is adopted to find out about the participants' underlying reasons for the metaphors they offered. Results of the current study lead to five major conclusions: (1) metaphor is an effective tool to better understand English major students' conceptualizations about learning essay writing; (2) learners mostly perceived writing as a skill requiring much effort and also giving pleasure; (3) learners perceived learning essay writing as a difficult process and that being a successful writer requires a variety of demands such as hard work, perseverance, patience, and a positive attitude; (4) the elicited metaphors also highlight both positive and negative perceptions of learning essay writing and (5) the Saudi students' metaphorical perspectives were related to three approaches of teaching writing: the product approach, the process approach and the genre approach.

Keywords: *Essay Writing, Language Learnerbeliefs, Metaphor Analysis.*

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INTRODUCTION

No one can deny that writing is one of the main language skills which should be mastered to communicate with others. It is an active means of communication that requires a special attention as it is a productive language process. For university learners, writing is a critical communication tool to convey their thoughts and opinions, describe ideas and events, and analyze information (Dincer, 2017; Lampi and Paulson, 2016). In same vein, Al Beshar (2012) and Belinda (2006) mention that writing for academic purposes is essential to students for taking notes, describing objects or devices and writing essays, answering written questions, writing their compositions, writing experimental reportsetc. Thus, English writing for academic purposes is an important skill for college-level students. is an important skill for college-level students.

Though writing is considered extremely important, a lot of research studies conducted in the various EFL contexts strongly reported that writing is considered very difficult, complex and challenging skill to master, particularly in English as a foreign language (EFL) context where students face many challenges in writing (Al-Beshar, 2012; Alnofal, 2003; Hinkel, 2002). Trying to master writing in English is hard enough for native speakers of English, but it is even harder when one is writing in a foreign language (e.g., Dincer, 2017). Due to the difficulty of mastering the writing skills, many researchers exert their efforts to conduct many studies focusing on all aspects of writing such as punctuation, capitalization, spelling, grammar.....etc (Adas and Bakir, 2013; Belinda, 2006; Wan, 2012 and Nunan, 1991). However, few studies have examined the students' beliefs about the nature and development of the writing skill (Riddell, 2015; Lavelle et al 2001).

The reason for focusing on student beliefs about the nature of writing is that beliefs – conceptualizations – play a significant role in understanding how learners construct knowledge (Lampi & Paulson, 2016). Learners' beliefs can have a major impact on their thoughts and decisions. By understanding how a learner perceives the process of learning, the reason for the problems they face, and their experiences in the classroom, learners can improve the quality of their learning. Therefore, recognizing and pinpointing learners' beliefs and subjective impressions related to learning essay writing can greatly help teachers to tailor their teaching methods, their instructional materials and activities to avoid mismatches between classroom practices and learners' beliefs (Zhang, 2016; Daif-Allah, 2012; Farjami, 2012; Gebhard, 2009). As a

result, it seems reasonable to explore these students' perceptions about the nature of the writing skill to understand the development of this particular skill as well as providing some insights to educators on the effective assessment of classroom practices. Since it is too difficult to directly measure the beliefs (Bozdoğan, 2012), it seems necessary to try to find out more ways which can indirectly delve into the students' hidden ideas and beliefs.

There are many procedures for exploring the students' conceptualizations. Direct questionnaires delving into learners' beliefs about different dimensions of language learning (e.g., Farjami, 2012) have been one of the ways in which learner-internal processes could be explored. Metaphor is defined as –a device for seeing something in terms of something else (Cameron, 1999, p. 78). Metaphor is also viewed as a cognitive means for people to filter reality through their own mental images of real world phenomena (Nikitina and Furuoka, 2008). Metaphor analysis has been another way of exploring learners' beliefs by eliciting and looking into the images and metaphors which learners employ to define and describe their language learning indirectly (Asmalı and Çelik, 2017, Jitpranee, 2017; McGrath, 2006). In this elicitation mode, instead of directly asking learners about their beliefs, the researcher asks for concrete comparisons which closely match those beliefs (Paulson & Armstrong, 2011; Lakoff and Johnson, 2003; Kesen, 2010). The use of metaphors as an educational research tool and thought elicitation device has been employed and justified in many studies (Dincer, 2017; Bozdoğan, 2012; Nikitina and Furuoka, 2008; McGrath, 2006). In his study, Ellis and Barkhuizen also (2005) explain that the analysis of the metaphors that L2 learners use to talk about their learning can shed light on how they conceptualize the language they are learning, the process of learning itself and, in particular, the problems and obstacles they experience on the 'learning journey'. The advantage of enquiring into learners' thoughts and beliefs through less explicit means is that the findings are more likely to be authentic and genuinely reveal beliefs and values learners cherish (Ishiki, 2011; McGrath, 2006). When teachers are aware of learners' beliefs and subjective impressions related to foreign language learning, they can adjust the instructional materials and activities accordingly and bring about more learner-centered teaching.

A review of the literature reveals that over the last few decades there has developed a heightened awareness of the importance of metaphors as a tool to better understand how participants conceptualize their most basic views



about different perspectives such as teacher roles, student, language teaching and learning, course books, as well as others like technology, social network, mobile education, teacher identity, counseling service etc. (Dincer, 2017; Fang, 2015; Akbari, 2013; Gökand Erdoğan, 2010; De Guerrero and Villamil, 2002; Kesen, 2010, Saban, 2007; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). All in all, they have provided evidence about the usefulness of metaphor analysis as a research tool, revealing underlying structures in less-known L2 concepts.

The present study is different from the previous studies in several aspects. First of all, it focuses on the metaphors about the concept of learning essay writing produced by English major learners while a majority of previous studies explored the learners and teachers' metaphors of language teaching and learning to enable the educators to articulate and construct representations of themselves and their experience and to promote awareness of professional practice (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, p. 155). The present study explores the learners' perceptions of the concept of learning essay writing which may widen our perspective of the nature of writing skill. Secondly, the study conducts both qualitative and quantitative analyses of the metaphors. Finally, the present inquiry was conducted in an Asian educational context, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Although writing is one of the essential skills that students must develop during their four years of study in the English Language and Translation Department (ELTD) at Al-Qassim University, it has been noted that writing is not paid much attention in the Saudi context compared to the teaching of other language skills such as speaking and reading (Al Beshar, 2012; Aljamhour, 1996; Alnofal, 2003; Al Haysony, 2008). In addition to this, research in the past two decades has focused mostly on aspects of writing such as punctuation, capitalization, spelling, choosing vocabulary and correcting any grammatical mistakes (Levin and Wagner, 2006; Hinkel, 2002; and Nunan, 1999). However, few studies have been carried out concerning learners' beliefs about the nature of writing and their own writing process (e.g., Wan, 2012). Also, there seems to be little published work that has investigated the relationship between learners' conceptualizations of writing and their associated writing practices. As a result, it seems reasonable to explore the students' beliefs about the nature of the writing skill to understand the development of this particular skill as well as providing some insights to educators to tailor their

teaching methods, their instructional materials and activities to avoid mismatches between classroom practices and learners' beliefs (Zhang, 2016; Daif-Allah, 2012; Farjami, 2012; Gebhard, 2009). One way of exploring the substantive content of learners' thinking processes is to elicit and examine the metaphors which learners construct about learning essay writing.

With reference to the metaphor studies on investigating participants' conceptualizations, a considerable number of metaphor studies in the last two decades have examined both teachers and students' understandings of teaching and/or learning (Coskun, 2015; Ishiki, 2011; Akbari, 2013; Cortazzi and Jin, 1999; de Guerrero and Villamil, 2002; Nikitina and Furuoka, 2008; Bozdoğan, 2012; McGrath, 2006). However, very few have examined participants' specific language skills, such as writing (exceptions being, Armstrong, 2007; Hart, 2009; Wan, 2012). Motivated by the little literature available on metaphors produced by EFL/ESL learners on the one hand and the lack of metaphor analysis studies conducted on Saudi EFL learners on the other hand, this study aims to probe into the metaphors some Saudi English learners hold about the concept of learning essay writing.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In view of the above research aims, the research questions were formulated as in the following:

1. What metaphors do Saudi English majors develop to portray their perceptions related to the concept of learning English essay writing?
2. What are the reactions of the students towards learning essay writing in terms of the metaphors?
3. To what extent do the study findings (the metaphors produced by students) concur with theoretical approaches of teaching and learning essay writing?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The current study is significant for the following reasons:

1. It provides information concerning Saudi students' beliefs about learning English essay writing through metaphor analysis.
2. Due to the very few metaphor analysis studies conducted on EFL/ESL learners to explore their beliefs and views about essay writing, the present study is believed to be a pioneer in adopting metaphor analysis for the purpose of exploring EFL learners' conceptions about learning essay writing in the Saudi EFL context. Therefore, the



current study is expected to contribute to the existing literature on how essay writing is conceptualized by Saudi EFL learners.

3. Since this is the first study designed specifically to explore in detail the Saudi students' beliefs and views about essay writing through metaphor analysis, the findings will pave the way for further studies to be carried out globally as well as in other Saudi universities.
4. Identification of learners' beliefs will provide guidelines to EFL teachers to tailor their teaching methods to avoid mismatches between classroom practices and learners' beliefs.
5. Such investigation will be an extension of what has been done in this regard in other international cultural contexts (Armstrong, 2007; Hart, 2009; Wan, 2012).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is a descriptive study as it aims to present the available situation as it is. Mixed method including quantitative and qualitative techniques is used in this study. A mixed method research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem. The basic assumption is that the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods, in combination, provides a better understanding of the research problem and questions than either method by itself (Bozdoğan, 2012). The qualitative data were collected through metaphor elicitation method and interview. The reason for using two methods of data collection was to achieve triangulation of the data. In the analysis of qualitative data, the metaphors generated by learners were described, categorized, compared and analyzed by means of content analysis since data format was textual not numerical. Besides, in the analysis of quantitative data, the metaphors developed by students were analyzed with appropriate statistical methods.

SUBJECTS OF THE STUDY

The participants of this study were composed of 77 fourth year students studying in the Department of English Language and Translation at Qassim University in Saudi Arabia. The participants' ages ranged between 21 and 23. The subjects were informed about voluntary participation, anonymity, writing a metaphor and the metaphor vehicle. In this way, it was maintained that trust was built between the researcher and subjects. In addition, ensuring the confidentiality of their information was supposed to

increase the consent of the participants, and the quality of their data in return.

DATA COLLECTION

To accomplish the purposes of the study, data sources included metaphor elicitation instrument and semi-structured interview.

1. METAPHOR ELICITATION INSTRUMENT

Data were collected through a metaphor elicitation sheet prepared by the researcher based on previous studies (Bas and Gezeğin, 2015; McGrath, 2006; Sabanet.al. 2006). First, brief information was given to familiarize the students with the concept of metaphor. During this introductory session, the students were first presented with a general definition and description of the concept of metaphor followed by examples and excerpts obtained from previous studies (e.g. My course book is like sun because it enlightens our way while learning). Then, the metaphor elicitation questionnaires were distributed to the students, on which they each wrote only one metaphor. Upon generating their own metaphors, the respondents were asked to write an explanation for the metaphor they generated for the prompt "Learning essay writing is like ... because ...". This process took about 45 minutes. This study was conducted during autumn. The word "like" in studies that utilize metaphors as a research tool generally is used in order to connote the link between the "topic of the metaphor" and the "source of the metaphor". With the use of the word "because" in the sentence, the students were asked to explain why they chose that metaphor. The participants were given one class-hour (roughly 45 minutes) and they were encouraged to focus on only one metaphor.

To ensure fair and objective response to the questionnaires, the researcher assured all the participants that the questionnaires were anonymous and would by no means influence their final assessment since the investigation served for only academic purpose. Students were also told that their participation was entirely voluntary and that their responses would remain anonymous and that confidentiality would be maintained.

2. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

The second tool employed in this study is semi-structured interview. The reason for using the semi-structured interview is to clarify the points that might seem unclear to the researcher and to triangulate the findings and interpretations obtained through metaphor elicitation. Data triangulation in qualitative research plays an essential role in strengthening the validity in that it seeks to find out if



the data collected by different research instrument would lead to the same findings (Yin, 2011).

In the present study, interviews were conducted to gain more in-depth responses from the participants, and to find out about the participants' underlying reasons for the metaphors they offered. All the interviews were tape recorded and then translated into English and analyzed by the researcher.

PROCEDURE

The output of this survey was responses including metaphors depicting learning essay writing. In this study, data were collected through two instruments; namely metaphor elicitation sheet and interviews. Metaphor elicitations were given to all the participants in a classroom setting. Each participant was asked to complete the prompt "learning essay writing is like..." After completing the prompt, all the participants were also asked to clarify their choice of metaphor for the concept of their learning essay writing. Later steps used to organize the responses are summarized as follows:

1. Listing the collected metaphors
2. Each metaphor was categorized under different themes based on the entailments which were elicited through metaphor elicitation sheet and interviews.
3. The frequencies of these metaphors were determined.
4. The themes of the study were created on the basis of the entailments obtained from the two instruments used in the study (metaphor elicitation sheet and interview).
5. The collected data were interpreted and analyzed by the researcher of the present study. Since the entailments behind each metaphor play a significant role in this research, they were incorporated in each set of data.
6. Two instructors (familiar with studies on metaphors) were given the list of themes and related metaphors prepared by the researcher and they were asked to decide whether the metaphors and the themes in which they appeared matched or not, in order to provide reliability in this study.
7. The forms that subjects had filled with their metaphors about learning essay writing were analyzed based on the guidelines suggested by de Guerrero and Villamil (2002), Armstrong (2007) and Farjami (2012)
8. The students' interview data was analyzed to see how the students elaborated on the reason for creating a specific metaphor for

the concept of learning essay writing. The analysis of the interview was carried out to strengthen the entailments that students wrote in their metaphor elicitation sheet. The entailments acquired from the students' interviews were added to the list of metaphors prepared by the researcher.

It should be noted that frequencies and percentages of the categories and individual metaphors were presented in the findings and discussion section. In addition, the metaphors were explained with reference to the entailments they include in order to reveal the participants' conceptualizations underlying the metaphors.

FINDINGS

Researchers claim that metaphors are crucial in human communication and are effective in understanding and revealing feelings as well as conveying opinions. Metaphors can contribute to exchanging ideas, expressing attitudes and reflecting values (Bozdoğan, 2012). The impetus for this study comes from the need to have a glimpse of the mental pictures of a group of EFL majors and tentatively describe how they see learning essay writing. Therefore, the researcher could not only investigate how students perceive learning essay writing but also identify their attitudes towards it by scrutinizing and categorizing various metaphors students produced. It is in the spirit of this purpose that some issues, features, and strands running through the metaphors and concepts are discussed below.

FINDINGS RELATED TO THE FIRST RESEARCH QUESTION

The first research question was on the metaphors produced by the participants to describe the concept of learning essay writing. The researcher examined the responses of 77 participants to the elicitation device multiple times and found that Saudi students conceptualized their learning essay writing using seventy seven distinct metaphors. Metaphors collected were explored both qualitatively and quantitatively along the line taken by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) who argue that metaphors are mental constructs shaping human thinking about the world and reality. All the metaphors developed by the participants were categorized into eighteen thematic categories which were designed on the basis of participants' elaborations on their metaphors both in the written (questionnaire) and oral (interviews) forms. The thematic categories included in the following tables are construction(n=5, 6.9%), cooking(n=4, 5.5%), growth(n=4, 5.5%), Freedom of expression (n=5, 6.9%), job(n=4, 5.5%), knitting(n=3, 4.1%), film(n=3, 4.1%), sport(n=7, 9.7%), journey(n=5,



6.9%), art(n=4, 5.5%), preciousness(n=4, 5.5%), taste(n=5, 6.9 %), fear(n=5, 6.9%), torture(n=8, 11.1%), chore(n=4, 5.5%), and weather(n=7, 9.7 %).

Sixteen tables display these metaphorical themes—the general notions which were abstracted from analogies. Frequencies and percentages of the themes and individual metaphors were presented in the findings and discussion section. In addition, the metaphors were explained with reference to the entailments they include in order to reveal the participants' conceptualizations underlying the metaphors. Entailments which support students' metaphors were taken into account as much as the metaphors themselves since they entailed students' mental process of development and elaboration of thoughts and thus necessarily incorporated into the analysis.

The metaphors about learning essay writing produced by Saudi participants are discussed under each conceptual theme or category as follows:

CATEGORY 1: LEARNING ESSAY WRITING IS CONSTRUCTION

The first theme of metaphors is "construction". Table 1 displays five different metaphors under the theme of "construction". Five participants compare essay writing to construction work, a brick wall, designing the blue prints for a building, designing a temple, and building a house. According to the entailments in table 1, it has been noted that the participants who provided these metaphors perceive learning essay writing as construction work to show the hard work, solid foundation, perseverance, confidence, and patience that are involved in learning essay writing. It is noteworthy to mention that the students' entailments for their choice of the elicited metaphors have indicated that both the construction and the writing process were similar in several ways:

1. The architect (writer) needs to understand and grasp the basic skills and rules (writing conventions);
2. It takes time to learn these skills and rules (writing conventions).
3. Both the writing and the construction process need to make a global plan and create a framework (an outline for writing) at the beginning of the work;
4. The writer and the architect carefully search for material (writing ideas) according to the writer's plan;
5. Both the writing and the construction process follow some steps to get the final product.
6. When asking one of the interviewees about the reason for depicting learning essay writing to construction process, he says:

"In order to build a house, or mosque, you need first to draw up the plan. You can't build your house without a plan, and you have to follow the plan. The same can be followed in writing an essay. You have to follow some steps to get the final product".

Such explanation indicates how students conceive the writing process as a mode of learning in the context of learning essay writing in classroom. Moreover, it has been noted that the participants become clear about the steps involved in writing an essay.

It is important to note that the metaphors under the "construction" theme were also used for the concept of "learning essay writing" in other studies (Dincer 2017; Wan, 2012; Farjami, 2012; Hart, 2009). This may mean that for the participants who used the "construction" metaphors, the concept of learning essay writing is not different from that of essay writing in a general sense.

Table 1. "Construction" theme regarding the concept of learning essay writing

Theme (F; %)	Metaphor	Entailments
Writing as a constructive process (5; 6.9%)	Writing an essay is like building a house	To build a house, you must first draw up the plans and make sure that what you're building is on solid ground. In writing, you follow some steps. You have your first draft, editing and revising, and then you form your final copy.
	Writing an essay is like a brick wall.	First you start at the bottom, build a foundation, and as you build more, it gets stronger and stronger.
	Writing is like constructing a building.	I chose to say writing is like constructing a building because all buildings have certain key elements that are necessary, but have much room for unique design.



	Writing an essay is like construction work.	It can be productive and leave one with a sense of accomplishment, but the act can be laboring and unpleasant at times. It takes time to build your essay.
	Writing an essay is like designing a mosque.	There are many different steps you follow to build a mosque. In writing my essay, I follow some steps to get my final product.

CATEGORY 2: LEARNING ESSAY WRITING IS COOKING

The second metaphorical theme is "cooking". In Table 2, it is seen that under the theme of "cooking", four different metaphors were developed by four learners. Outstanding metaphors were found as "working on a recipe for food, baking a cake, and making a sandwich". "Writing an essay is analogous to baking a cake because baking a cake uses many ingredients just as good writing includes many skills in order for the product to be successful." To be successful, the cook (the writer) must be clearly aware of the recipe/writing norms and strictly follow them in the actual performance. These metaphors tend to point to the participants' awareness of the writing process approach.

One of the interviewees made reference to "making a sandwich" when describing his essay writing. A discussion with him confirmed that the following aspects of the source (a sandwich) were mapped onto the target (essay):

1. Like a sandwich, learner's assignment adopts a three-part structure (introduction, arguments, and conclusion);
2. To make the hamburger taste delicious (improve the writer's ideas), it is necessary to add condiments (transitions) among the three parts.
3. From a customer's point of view (from the reader's perspective), it is important to clarify the combination of the fillings (state the writer's position about the subject matter).

Looking at these entailments above, the aspects of learner's writing highlighted by the "sandwich" metaphor are the use of transitional devices (i.e., transition words/sentences) to improve the arguments, and the importance of making the writer's position stand out. From his perspective, the

writing would be likely to go wrong, if either of the two aspects were neglected.

Another interviewee used metaphorical expression relevant to cooking. In his metaphorical expression of "adding ingredients", the most relevant source aspect to be mapped onto the target was the fact that mixing unnecessary ingredients (i.e., irrelevant writing ideas) seriously destroyed the flavor in the cooking (i.e., the main ideas and arguments in the essay).

The interviewee added (at his interview) that "adding condiments among the three parts" was metaphorically mapped onto using transitions in his writing, for the purpose of improving his arguments: *You may need to announce to your reader a change in your argument or you want to emphasize one of your points. In all these cases, transition markers such as expressions or sentences can help readers understand your arguments.*

It is fair to say that the connection between "adding condiments" and using transitions was fairly opaque. Without interviewee's explanation, at his interview, it seems difficult, from his written metaphorical statement, to link the function of adding condiments to connecting the three parts in interviewee's writing, (namely, introduction, arguments and conclusion) by using transitions.

The entailments in table 2 indicate that the participant used to justify the elicited metaphors inform us about learners' awareness of implicit approaches of learning essay writing. Some of the data displayed a tendency towards a product approach to learning essay writing by describing the process of learning as being dependent on practice producing their written products rather than on the products themselves. This is clear in the students' entailments which are shown in table 2.

Table 2. "Cooking" theme regarding the concept of learning essay writing

Theme (F;%)	Metaphor	Entailments
Food (4, 5.5%)	Writing an essay is like cooking with recipe.	There are many options like what you will cook and how you will cook it. Writing is full of options. You can always add ingredients (words) or change the recipe (or essay).



	In writing an essay adding too many ideas is like adding ingredients when cooking.	In the feedback of my essay, my teacher considered that I added too many unnecessary ingredients that badly affected the flavor. I should have carefully refined/arranged ideas in my outline next time.
	Writing an essay is like baking a cake.	Writing is baking a cake because it takes many steps to write a good essay like it takes many steps to bake a good cake.
	Writing an essay is like making a sandwich.	I adopt a three-paragraph model. Introduction and conclusion are two slices of bread. Between the two is the cooked meat which represents the body of the essay.

CATEGORY 3: LEARNING ESSAY WRITING IS KNITTING

In Table 3, different metaphors are inspected under the theme of "Knitting". The metaphors of the "knitting" process show that many

learners in this theme portray essay writing as weaving, wearing an expensive dress and a thread in the fabric of life. In their entailments, one of the students compares weaving to writing.

Table 3. "Knitting" theme regarding the concept of learning essay writing

Theme (F; %)	Metaphor	Entailments
Writing as a knitting (3; 4.1)	My essay writing is quite like weaving.	I chose this metaphor for the following reason. At the beginning of weaving, it takes time to think about the design of the target image and then about choices of colour thread. Before I start writing my essay, I spend a lot of time on an outline that will later guide me to find appropriate ideas.
	Writing an essay is like a thread in the fabric of life which can open a door of opportunity.	The reason I chose this is because someone who has writing skills is able to read, communicate, and even complete necessary tasks in life. For example, getting a job, submitting a college essay which can in turn open a door to great opportunity.
	Writing is like wearing an expensive dress	It is difficult to buy an expensive dress but when you buy it, you can enjoy it.

According to this metaphor, both the writer and weaver are similar in the following:

1. The weaver (writer) needs to make a global plan and create a framework (an outline for writing) at the beginning of the work;
2. The weaver (writer) carefully searches for material (writing ideas) according to the weaver's/writer's plan;
3. The final product will be exhibited to and evaluated by other people (assessment of writing);
4. The weaver (writer) feels apprehensive about the result of the evaluation (the results of assessment).

It can be seen from these entailments in table 3 that the participants perceive the stages of planning and submission in the writing process. The metaphor displays that the learner spent considerable time on creating an outline. It is noteworthy to mention that the metaphors are

similar to those observed in other studies (e.g. Fang 2015; Akbari, 2013; Wan, 2012; Hart, 2009).

CATEGORY 4: LEARNING ESSAY WRITING IS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The fourth theme (17.11%) was entitled "a freedom of expression". The frequency and percentage of metaphors developed by the students related to the theme of "freedom of expression" category was presented in Table 4. The metaphors to describe this category were: a doorway, giving a speech, a bird, an outlet for the mind, talking to the world, and speaking. These metaphors show that the participants are aware of the main purposes of the writing skill. This theme also corresponds to the findings of Hart (2009) who show that metaphors that described learning essay writing in terms of "communicating" viewed in terms of developing bonds between the individual and other people



(Awareness of the cultural difference between the nations).

Table 4. "Freedom of expression" theme regarding the concept of learning essay writing

Theme(F; %)	Metaphor	Entailments
Freedom of expression (F5; 6.9%)	Writing an essay is like a doorway.	It can be used as a passage to other cultures, and to other people. If people understand what you write, then you can have endless possibilities of communication.
	Writing an essay is like giving a speech.	As they both express the speaker/writer's ideas and make their argument accepted by the audiences.
	Writing an essay is like a bird.	Because the bird can fly every where freely and there is no border for a bird. When you write English, the world becomes so small for you; you can travel freely without fear."
	Writing an essay is like talking to the world.	When people sit down and write out a piece of work they tend to expose their thinking process and beliefs to anyone willing to read that work.
	Writing an essay is like speaking.	I use it to communicate and say how I feel. I can also substitute it for speech if I want to or have to.

One of the interviewees explains why he compared his essay writing to the process of making a speech. According to his account, connections between the target (writing) and the source (making a speech) are:

1. The expected objectives of writing and a speech are to (a) convey someone's viewpoints and (b) convince other people about the argument;
2. To achieve these objectives, it is important to provide sufficient properly referenced evidence;
3. Showing the speaker's (writer's) engagement with the evidence can give weight to the argument.

The entailments in table 5 indicate that some students view writing more positively because they see it as an outlet for self-expression. Such finding is consistent with that of Shaw and Mahlios (2014) explained how they worked with struggling and resistant students to help them find motivation for writing by focusing on writing as a channel for self-expression.

CATEGORY 5: LEARNING ESSAY WRITING IS GROWTH

Five metaphors are written under the theme of "growth".The category "growth" describes the

process of improving or developing essay writing. This growth can be gradual and slow, and leads a change. These metaphors in this category are: *watering a plant, a young tree, flower blossoming, and gardening*. These metaphors signify how the participants define progress in writing. They associate their current level of English with young and imperfect. Flower metaphors focused on time to grow, beauty, or opportunity for self-expression. "Writing is a flower blossoming because writing starts with an idea and a flower starts with a seed and both continue to grow and develop to something beautiful when finished." This also suggests their recognition of their current status as learners of English essay writing who needs more time and practice to be proficient in writing (i.e. grown tree).

The entailments in table 6 indicate that the metaphors grouped under this theme stress changing and gradual features of language learning process. During the interviews, the learners creating these metaphors stated that learning essay writing like others needs a lot of time and care to develop. It is noteworthy to mention that the metaphors categorized under this theme are similar to those observed in other studies (Bas and Gezezin 2015; Farjami, 2012)

**Table 5 "Growth" regarding the concept of learning essay writing**

Theme (F; %)	Metaphor	Entailments
Growth (4; 5.5%)	Writing an essay is like watering a plant.	When you write, you are releasing thoughts and words from inside of you, like water from a hose. You can write too many ideas to truly get your point across. Similarly, a plant doesn't need too much water to live.
	Writing an essay is like a young tree.	You have to take care of it every day, so did writing. Writing first came from a seed, that seed being language, and language grew, so did writing.
	Writing an essay is like flower blossoming.	"Writing is a flower blossoming because writing starts with an idea and a flower starts with a seed and both continue to grow and develop to something beautiful when finished."It is laborious but it is a great feeling to see flowers blossom.
	Writing an essay is like gardening.	As taking care of a little tree; because I need pay attention to the arguments and choose appropriate evidences to support my views.

CATEGORY 6: LEARNING ESSAY WRITING IS FILM

Four metaphors were found in the theme of "film". Some participants conceptualized learning essay writing as *song, silent movie, and watching a film*. Such metaphors indicate positive perceptions of the learners. It can also be concluded from the entailments in table 6 that some students have positive feelings about the concept of learning essay writing. They see that learning essay writing gives them happiness, and they had the feeling of doing

something demanding. The entailments in table 6 indicated that learners using these metaphors perceive the process of learning essay writing as a course that gives pleasure. It is also important to note that learners using the metaphors "play on an instrument" and "song" stated that they referred to a happy song and music with a happy ending.

It is noteworthy to mention that the metaphors are similar to those observed in Farjami (2012) who has noted that his students have a very positive attitude toward learning a foreign language.

Table 6. "Film" theme regarding the concept of learning essay writing

Theme (F, %)	Metaphor	Entailments
Film (3; 3.1%)	Writing an essay is like learning a new song to play on an instrument.	There are lots of things to think about at one time (breathing, tempo, notes, tune, etc.), but once you get the hang of it and practice, you can get it.
	Writing an essay is like a silent movie.	In a silent movie, we can't hear the inflections in a person's voice, so we rely on the actors to physically convey emotions on screen. Similarly, the words used in an essay should paint a picture in the reader's mind.
	Writing an essay is like watching a film	I choose this metaphor because it makes you happy. You are able to hear someone's point of view and possibly learn something from them.

CATEGORY 7: LEARNING ESSAY WRITING IS JOB

Four metaphors were created under the theme of "job". Four participants depict learning essay writing as a new job, doing a job, a tedious task, a job and working. These images show how overwhelming and painful learning essay writing is

for some learners. According to the results in table 7, the entailments for this category pictured that learning essay writing is like a tedious job. Accordingly, they have negative perceptions towards essay writing.

**Table 7. "Job" theme regarding the concept of learning essay writing**

Theme(F; %)	Metaphor	Entailments/ rationales
Job (F4; 5.5%)	Writing is like doing a job.	Sometimes it is great and rewarding and sometimes you have to do something that does not interest you one bit but you have to do it or you get fired.
	Writing is like a tedious task.	Something I do not enjoy. Takes time and a lot of work and in the end it's a relief to be done.
	Writing is like working.	I feel this way because almost all of the writing I do, and that matters, relates to business: contracts, e-mails, memos, etc.
	Writing is like a job.	You have to do what is told and when it is due.

CATEGORY 8: LEARNING ESSAY WRITING IS SPORT

Seven metaphors are grouped under the "sport" theme like "learning to ride a bike, water skiing, running, climbing up to the mountain, a sport, running a marathon and learning swimming". As shown in table 8, the learners' generated metaphors in this theme mostly related to the difficulty of the writing skill and the pleasure associated with the skill. For example, marathon metaphor focused on hard work, skill, and preparation. "Writing is running a marathon because becoming a good writer is a difficult process of hard work and running a marathon is a difficult task. One gets tired along the way but keep on going and when one's finished essay is a success, it's as if you have won the marathon." The sporting images in this theme suggest that learning essay writing is pretty strenuous and takes effort but is enlivening, spirit boosting,

energizing and necessary. The metaphors in this theme suggest that "learning sports" and learning essay writing were similar in several ways:

1. The learner (writer) needs to understand and grasp the basic skills and rules (writing conventions);
2. Basic skills and rules (writing conventions) are the prerequisite of managing the activity (essay);
3. It takes time to learn these skills and rules (writing conventions).

Within this category of metaphors, learning does not happen in one go or overnight. When one wants to learn swimming, skiing or riding a bike, one should brace for different situations, which may be sometimes exacting and tough; so, it is very unlikely that holders of "sport" metaphors would expect to learn essay writing by following a set of rules and a number of vocabulary items.

Table 8. "Sport" theme regarding the concept of learning essay writing

Theme(F; %)	Metaphor	Entailments/ rationales
Sport (F 7; 9.7%)	Learning essay writing is like running.	To become a good writer or runner, you have to practice. The more you practice, the more comfortable you feel writing/running.
	Learning essay writing is like a sport.	Writing is like playing a sport. No matter how much or how hard you practice, you never reach perfection.
	Learning essay writing is like water skiing.	It takes a lot of time to be good at skiing and you fall over and over again but when you get up and ski it feels great. Writing is the same way, you make mistakes over and over again until you finally write a great essay.
	Learning essay writing is like riding a bike.	Writing is learning to ride a bike because writing is difficult at first but with learned skills and practice one gets better and better.
	Learning essay writing is like climbing up to the mountain	You can climb the mountain one by one to reach the top. It's difficult at first, but easy later. Writing is like climbing a mountain. In learning, I climb to the top of the mountain – the higher you go the more beauty you will see.



	Learning essay writing is like learning swimming.	One of the important things is to familiarize oneself with basic skills and rules which let you good at swimming. At the moment, I am getting used to the specific writing conventions. When you know all the rules, writing can become something you are good at and the easier, more natural, it becomes.
	Learning essay writing is like running a marathon	If you want to become a good writer, you have to hard work. Running a marathon is also a difficult task. One gets tired along the way but keeps on going and when one's finished essay is a success, it's as if you have won the marathon.

Through the interviews with some students, it has been noted that some students are struggling in mastering skills of essay writing. Students gave positive metaphors and rationales, but they also talked about their struggle as language learners. It's difficult at first, but easy later. It is noteworthy to mention that the metaphors are similar to those observed in other studies (e.g. Dincer, 2017; Wan, 2012; Hart, 2009)

CATEGORY 9: LEARNING ESSAY WRITING IS ART

According to table 9, four metaphors were presented under the "art" theme. Four participants depicted an essay writing as a piece of art, painting, an emerging sculpture, drawing a picture and making necklace (see table 9). It seems from looking at the metaphors provided by students that learning essay writing was viewed as an artistic expression of the learner's creativity, artistry and personality. The entailments for this theme were presented in table 9.

Table 9. "Art" theme regarding the concept of learning essay writing

Theme (F; %)	Metaphor	Entailments
Writing as an art (F 4; 5.5%)	Learning essay writing is like art and design.	It is like art because it is a form of expression people can use. Writing, like art, allows you to voice your opinion on anything and everything. It is like art because it is often times considered beautiful.
	Learning essay writing is like oil painting.	When writing, you paint a picture. Someone once said "a picture is worth a thousand words." Using words one must describe a scene in a way that a reader may visualize it as if viewing it in a gallery. This is the challenge and the art of writing.
	Learning essay writing is drawing a picture	Writing is drawing a picture because writing is putting all the necessary parts in their correct place as in drawing a picture.
	Learning essay writing is like making necklace.	My duties are to design the shape and form of the necklace and string these beads. In my writing, I need to make sure the contents are logically connected.

When asking one of the interviewees why he associates essay writing with oil painting. He states that the revised "oil painting" metaphor made the intangible writing process visible, by stressing the transformation of ideas and thoughts. At his follow-up interview, he explained that the links between "painting" and his essay writing were as follows:

1. The painter (writer) has to clarify the target image (the writer's conceptions/ideas).

2. There is a fair degree of difference between the final product (writing) and the original image (the writer's original conceptions/ideas).
3. It seems to be difficult for both writer and painter to make the final product in a way that represents the original image.

The above mappings imply that the learner's writing difficulties could stem from: being unable to accurately voice his thoughts and ideas, and having



difficulties in choosing how to present his thoughts and ideas in written English. Though it is tough process, but once you do, you feel happy. It is noteworthy to mention that such metaphors are similar to those observed in other studies (e.g. Fang, 2015; Wan, 2012).

CATEGORY 10: LEARNING ESSAY WRITING IS PRECIOUSNESS

Another noticeable theme is "preciousness" including metaphors such as diamond, mining, uncovering a precious stone and discovering treasure. The entailments in table 10 indicate that the process of learning English essay writing is like finding a hidden treasure because it's hard to find, but once you do you'll see the rewards.

When asked during the interviews, one of the interviewees stated that "mining" could be linked to his writing as follows:

1. The miner (the writer) has to search for something of value (writing sources including examples and evidence in a subject area);
2. They both have to eliminate unwanted stuff (irrelevant/poor quality writing sources);
3. The miner (the writer) has to look for a long time before he/she finds anything useful;
4. Mining (writing) is time-consuming.

It also can be seen from the entailments below that the "mining" metaphor stresses the difficulty of searching for ideas and the toil required to refine what is mined. The "mining" metaphor also reveals that their writing problems could stem from the failure to (a) find sufficient writing ideas and/or (b) extract useful/relevant knowledge from reading.

Table 10. "Preciousness" theme regarding the concept of learning essay writing

Theme (F; %)	Metaphor	Entailments
Preciousness (F4; 5.5%)	Essay writing is like a diamond.	Writing is like uncovering a precious stone, first one has to dig it out of the ground. Once out of the ground it has to be polished, cut, and set. Writing also has its raw phases and is polished and refined.
	Essay writing is a mining.	A good essay relies on sufficient ideas. You have to search the ideas, eliminate anything irrelevant and refine what you have found, in order to make the raw stuff suitable for use. You have to bear in mind that it takes time. The same as the mining process, the miner descends to the depths of the mine with a lamp on his forehead to look for a precious metal.
	Essay writing is like uncovering a precious stone	First one has to dig it out of the ground. Once out of the ground it has to be polished, cut, and set. Writing also has its raw phases and is polished and refined.
	Essay writing is like finding a hidden treasure.	It's hard to find, but once you do you'll see the rewards.

According to the entailments in table 10, it becomes clear that students emphasize the systematic hard work that is involved in learning essay writing. They use metaphors such as diamond, mining and discovering treasure to show the hard work, solid foundation, perseverance, confidence, and patience that are involved in learning English essay writing.

According to the results in table 10, it was found that some participants came up with ambivalent metaphors. These metaphors illustrated expressed that learning essay writing is at first challenging but later rewarding when you learn it. This theme includes images which explicitly refer to issues of pains and pleasure and ease and difficulty

which Saudi students experienced when writing their essays.

CATEGORY 11: LEARNING ESSAY WRITING IS JOURNEY

When table 11 is inspected, it is seen that 5 learners developed five different metaphors under the theme of a journey. The metaphors in this category are: "tour", "travel", "a road trip", "a map", "a vacation" and "a journey". The category "journey" covers any kind of work that students do for interest and pleasure. Although the students may have a goal to achieve, it is not obligatory, and it is done for fun. According to the entailments in table 11, writing is seen as an activity that the students enjoy doing. To illustrate, in a vacation metaphor, the stated view of



learning essay writing includes excitement, joy and curiosity that is felt in having vacation. The student also values the delight of learning essay writing within this metaphor.

The entailments for the metaphor "a road trip" indicate that the road is also described as 'long', 'hard' and 'difficult': learning is a long and difficult journey; it needs long time to complete it. One of the interviewees says: *Sometimes it can be fun and enjoyable and other times it makes me tired and weak.* Another interviewee says: *"the more you travel, the more you want to travel, which as a language learner, the more one learns, the more s/he wants to learn"*. It is also emphasized that once the journey starts, things which seem difficult become

easier along the road. The path is full of pain and happiness; the road to success is full of tears and mirth; climbing with both hardship and happiness; happiness and pain mixed together; walking with taking pain and sweetness together, no sweet without sweat; on this road you hear the sadness in your happy laughter. The bitterness and suffering are sometimes presented as necessary features: you can't feel happy about learning unless you taste the hardship of it, a bitter experience which includes happiness and pain, sometimes you suffer, and sometimes it can be enjoyable. It is noteworthy to mention that the metaphors are similar to those observed in other studies (Fang, 2015; Bas and Gezeğin, 2015; Hart 2009; Cortazzi and Jin, 1999)

Table 11. "Journey" theme regarding the concept of learning essay writing

Theme (F; %)	Metaphor	Entailments
Writing as a journey (F5; 6.9%)	Learning essay writing is like travel.	Learn more, see more, and know more as you travel. Get more knowledge.
	Learning essay writing is like a road trip.	Writing is like a road trip. Sometimes it can be fun and enjoyable and other times It makes me tired and weak.
	Essay writing is like a journey.	Themore you travel, the more you want to travel, which as a language learner, the more one learns, the more he wants to learn.
	Learning essay writing is like a map.	When you first look at a map, it looks very complicated but when you look into it deeper, you will understand that the map is easy.
	Learning essay writing is like a vacation.	Because it is full of joy.

CATEGORY 12: LEARNING ESSAY WRITING IS TORTURE

The category "torture" describes the act of causing severe pain or suffering, either physically or mentally. Most of the metaphors in the "torture" theme portray essay writing as a bad experience. Some participants compare learning essay writing to "a night of no sleep", "boring day", "driving a stick shift", "nightmare", "burning in a fire", "torture", "a rock in a garden" and "headache". Some students may be thinking of a difficult or even painful experience and look at writing negatively.

However, the metaphors related to this theme indicate that the language learners are not interested in learning essay writing, and they felt as if they had a nightmare when they try to write English essay. The images also indicate that the learners may experience impediments in learning essay writing. The reasons why learners associate an English essay writing with these concepts that carry the feeling of difficulty and fear might be attributed to learners'

past classroom experiences. That is, inappropriate method of teaching essay writing used by the language teacher might have caused learners to develop negative feelings for learning English essay writing.

Learners who associate learning essay writing with negative ideas in their images should also be attended to. They may have had a history of hardship with writing study and be still confused about its nature. They may not have a clear idea about the approaches of learning essay writing that they should acquire; or, the unrealistic demands of the programs may have created in them a state of despair and helplessness. Certainly, some demystification about the nature of writing and some functional and tangible emphasis can light their minds and remove their misconceptions about writing. Teachers should help students realize and learn to be an English major by sharing with them the learning experience, focusing on developing more writing skills and helping them build up confidence.

**Table 12 "torture" theme regarding the concept of learning essay writing**

Theme (F; %)	Metaphor	Entailments
Torture (F8; 11.1%)	Learning essay writing is like a long, boring day.	Writing always makes me tired and is always an excruciating burden on my shoulders. I always put it off until the last second.
	Learning essay writing is like a night of no sleep.	Writing is like a night of no sleep. It wears on you and is frustrating. It is something you have to do to get to the finished product.
	Learning essay writing is like torture.	It causes me pain and frustration to write. I never meet the specified length and I always struggle to start.
	Learning essay writing is like driving a stick shift.	It is difficult at first and you have to try again and again to get it right, but once you learn how to do it, you never forget.
	Writing an essay is like a headache.	It is painful, something unwanted, and I don't like it. It's never good, and I don't want to have to deal with it but I have to.
	Writing an essay is like a nightmare.	Because you already know that there is nothing to do with it.
	Writing an essay is like burning in a fire.	It hurts you, and you want to run away from the fire. When I write English, I feel like I am burning in the fire or so afraid that I can even forget my name, not just the vocabularies that I need to use."
	Writing an essay is a rock in a garden.	Because my spelling is so bad and I have a hard time getting through that.

In our final interview, it was important for writers to continually remind themselves that they will have difficulties with writing at times. These difficulties are a natural part of the process, and writers should try to keep this in mind so that they would not get discouraged. One of the participants feel that writing is tough to start and you may not like it sometimes but it gets easier and more fun as you go on. It is noteworthy to mention that the metaphors are similar to those observed in other studies (Lin, Shein, and Yang, 2012; Abs and Gezegin, 2015)

CATEGORY 13: LEARNING ESSAY WRITING IS WEATHER

Another theme of elicited metaphors produced by the participants named as "weather" which contains metaphors such as "a rainy day", "a cloudy day", "a map", "a rainbow", "a natural

disaster" "weather" or "calm before a storm". It can be concluded from the entailments that learning essay writing is difficult and once they started writing they got lost and found themselves in failure. When asked during the interviews, most of the participants also stated that the reason for such an analogy is that learning English essay writing gives them gain and pain. But it is worth the effort because it will "lead them somewhere as they expected." Due to the difficulty of essay writing which was clear in the students' entailments (see table, 13), teachers should help students focus on developing more skills and help them build up confidence and motivate themselves to be successful language learners, since students accept the notion of being hardworking, persevering and active (Hart, 2009).

**Table 13. "Weather" theme regarding the concept of learning essay writing**

Theme (F; %)	Metaphor	Entailments
Weather (7; 9.7%)	Writing an essay is like a rainy day.	I do not like writing or expressing my thoughts on paper. A rainy day is not a very fun day, and neither is having to write.
	Writing an essay is like a map.	When you first look at a map, it looks very complicated but when you look into it deeper, you will understand that the map is easy.
	Writing an essay is like rainbow.	Everywhere gets dark, it rains but finally the rainbow appears. Learning essay writing is the same. It is difficult at the beginning, but it will be worth later.
	Writing an essay is like the weather	Writing can be beautiful, writing can be hard to predict, and some writing can be bad, like the weather.
	Writing an essay is like a cloudy day.	Writing is like day with some clouds and with a little sun. Writing is difficult and makes my head cloudy when I can't think of what to write. Cloudy days are dull and gloomy just like writing.
	Writing is like a natural disaster.	I never know when writing is going to be needed for a class, and when I find out, it hits hard—like an earthquake.
	Writing an essay is like calm before a storm.	I always have plenty of ideas but once I begin to write it's like a big thunderstorm due to being unorganized or I feel as if it's not good enough.

CATEGORY 14: LEARNING ESSAY WRITING IS TASTE

In Table 14 we see that under the theme "taste", 7 metaphors were represented by learners: ice cream, any other art form, clothes everyone wears, join in a debate, a lawyer making a case at trial and a batting stance. The participants using these metaphors for the concept of an English essay

writing stated that ice cream always has different flavors so does an essay writing. They added that essay writing course always instilled the feeling of good taste in them. It can be concluded from the entailments that the students are aware of the different styles of writing.

Table 14. "Taste" theme regarding the concept of learning essay writing

Theme(F;%)	Metaphor	Entailments
taste (5; 6.9%)	Writing is like ice cream.	I choose ice cream because there are many different flavors, just like there are many different writing styles.
	Writing is like any other art form.	Writing should be a totally free expression of ideas. Writing should not be strictly bound by rules and regulations. Of course, basic grammar is necessary simply so that it can be understood by others. Aside from that, no writing style should be held with more esteem in a creative environment. Clearly, some styles need to be used for professional purposes though.
	Writing is like the clothes everyone wears.	All writing styles vary in one way or another. We all wear clothes according to what the weather is that day; we all write according to how we feel. Each one has his own style.



	Writing an argument is like join in a debate.	To make your opponent convince what you say, you should not only provide the evidence but also include your own evaluation of the evidence, showing how the evidence could be used to support your position.
	Making an argument in writing is like a lawyer making a case at trial that someone is not guilty.	Your readers are the jury who will decide if the person is guilty. Winning the trial required the lawyer to make an organized presentation and show sufficient evidence to the jury (Wendy, orig. words).

At the interview, one of the students who portrayed "making an argument in writing as a lawyer making a case at trial" added the following commentson the need for an awareness of the reader's perspective:

In the court, the jury may not just take what the lawyer (i.e., the writer) says about his client not being guilty. This means stating your opinion confidently is not enough to win the case. At the same time, the lawyer will be asked to present sufficient relevant evidence.

From his perspective, the aim of constructing an argument is not a battle between two disagreeing sides; instead, it is more like an arranged and supported presentation of a viewpoint at a writing class, where both sides desired a better understanding of the subject matter under discussion.

CATEGORY 15: LEARNING ESSAY WRITING IS FEAR

The metaphors under the theme of "fear" imply the negative perceptions of Saudi EFL learners in regard to the concept of evaluating essay writing. Some students were displeased with evaluating essay writing. Six students depict the process of evaluating essay writing as a story, practical driving test, a race, a stressful event, a cloud or like a space between two rocks.

The reasons why learners associate evaluating essay writing with these images that carry the feeling of fear might be attributed to learners' past classroom experiences. That is, inappropriate methods of teaching the writing course by the languageteacher might have caused learners to develop fear for leaning essay writing.

Through the interview, one of the learners creating the metaphor "the driving test" stated that both the driving test and writing assessment are similar in the following:

1. The nature of a driving test (writing an assignment) is to assess one's capacity (writing competence);
2. From the participant's perspective, the aim is to pass the assessment;
3. The result of a driving test (writing) is controlled by other people (tutors or markers);
4. The driver (the writer) is powerless in the situation;
5. The driving test (writing) is stressful due to the participant's anxiety about the result.

By examining the metaphorical correspondences between a "practical driving test" and his writing, the most relevant source aspect to be mapped onto the target is the conception of a purpose of writing as being grading the assessment. At the same time, what is also highlighted by the metaphor is a feeling of worry about the result of the assessment. The reason for the anxiety, as reported by one of the interviewee students, was the fact that *"the result is at the mercy of the examiner..."*, which indicated the writer/driver felt powerless in both activities and strongly suggested a lack of self-confidence (in his English writing proficiency). It should be noted that the student added his feeling of powerlessness at his follow-up interview. In the light of his addition, it seems reasonable to conclude that his view of writing as an examination-bound activity had a negative effect on his writing confidence and tended to increase his frustration level in writing.

Table 15. "Fear" theme regarding the concept of learning essay writing

Theme(F; %)	Metaphor	Entailments
Fear(F 5; 6.9%)	Evaluating essay writing is like a story	because it ends either good or bad for the students.
	Evaluating essay Writing likes practical driving test.	I cannot stop worrying the grade when I began writing essays. The result is at the mercy of the examiner. She/he will not be picky, if she/he wants me to pass.



	Evaluating essay writing is like a race	because there are always winners and losers at the end.
	Evaluating essay writing is like a stressful event	because it makes you anxious.
	Evaluating essay writing is like a car crash	because it may result for in a horrible manner.
	Writing is like a space between two rocks.	It's very hard at times to write because I donot want to be criticized.

CATEGORY 16: LEARNING ESSAY WRITING IS CHORE

The metaphors of the "chore" theme include images which explicitly refer to issues of writing revision which Saudi students experienced when revising their essays. Learners associate revising essay writing with ideas such as doing chores, emerging sculpture, flower arrangement and cleaning dust. These metaphors illustrated in Table 16 indicate that learning English essay writing process is at first challenging but later rewarding when you learn it.

One of the students commented on revising drafts, and talked of cleaning the dust in a house where language-related errors were metaphorically described as "dust". It can be seen from the mapping that the student perceived the revision process as an activity that primarily affected surface aspects of his texts: correcting grammar/vocabulary errors and proof reading. The foci appear not to include any global revising (e.g., changing the overall organization and paragraph structure) or content revising (e.g., modifying single argument). The expected result of revising, in his metaphorical statement, is that there is no error in the texts.

Table 16. "Chore" theme regarding the concept of learning essay writing

Theme (F; %)	Metaphor	Entailments
Revision (4; 5.5%)	Revising is like cleaning dust	After reconstruction of a house, you have to be really careful about every corner to keep the house shining. In writing, I normally read sentence by sentence in order to find the grammar/vocabulary error. The purpose is to smooth the language and ultimately make the essay pleasant to be read with no errors.
	Learning essay writing is like doing chores.	Nobody wants to do chores all of the time, just like writing. But once you get all of it done, it is a huge relief to be done. I do not enjoy writing.
	Learning essay writing is like an emerging sculpture.	After the first draft, it is a decision time for removing the unnecessary pieces. The next step is to carve the details, such as the eyes and hair (such as the individual argument). The final step is the surface decoration, smoothing the surface and coloring, such as revising the language errors and proof reading.
	Writing is like flower arrangement.	You have to make sure you get all right flowers to fit the occasion. Then you need to assemble the flowers, making sure they could match in the arrangement. You then need to cut the unwanted flowers and branches and then adjust the bouquet until you achieve an ideal shape. Finally, it's time to decorate it, making the bouquet have a nice look, like smoothing the texts in writing.



Another student compares revising an essay to flower arrangement. Based on his metaphorical statement, the following aspects of "flower arrangement" could be related to his writing:

1. The first step is to prepare the flowers to meet the occasion (search for relevant materials from readings);
2. Next, it is time to assemble the flowers (organize written ideas, including sequencing sets of points of argument in a logical order);
3. The rudiments of the bouquet need further adjustments to meet the target image (the demand of additional revisions of the first draft);
4. The first revision step is to adjust the flowers and branches (revise the contents);
5. The next step is to shape the bouquet (make changes in structure and/or organization);
6. The final step is to decorate the bouquet (proofread the text).

It can be seen from the mappings that, the aspects of the writing process that the "flower arrangement" metaphor stresses are collecting relevant ideas.

A third student described his writing as sculpture. His statement suggested that an emerging sculpture was comparable to his writing in several ways:

1. Based on the first draft, the first step is a global revision such as removing the unnecessary pieces (cutting the irrelevant contents) and adjusting the shape (revising the whole structure);
2. Next, one starts local revising, focusing on the details of the sculpture (the writer's individual argument);
3. The final revision is surface decoration (surface-level issues in writing such as rhetorical refining and proofreading).

These three connections suggest that the perceived writing as a repetitive process, consisting of three types of revision: organizational revision, content-related revision and surface-level revision. At his interview, the student commented on his feelings about the first draft, *"It looks like hacked pieces of stone and it is very hard to tell what it is going to be at that moment; however it is the foundation for the follow-up carving.* The student's reaction implies a degree of disappointment with the first draft, although he acknowledged the importance of a first draft.

FINDINGS RELATED TO THE SECOND RESEARCH QUESTION

The second research question aimed at shedding light on students' attitudes towards learning essay writing according to their metaphorical representations. The qualitative analysis of the metaphors constructed by the participants in the present study showed that the Saudi English-major students have a clear attitude towards learning essay writing, that is, either positive or negative.

THEMES OF METAPHORS WITH POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING ESSAY WRITING

The minority of metaphors formulated represent a positive attitude toward learning essay writing. Some metaphors are grouped under common themes including "art", "sport", "journey", "growth", "film", and "food". Metaphors under these previous themes indicate that learners have a pleasant and positive experience of learning English essay writing. Some participants depict learning essay writing as something fun and enjoyable. For instance, learning essay writing is described as a journey because when one travels, he/she gets to see and experience new things that would not be possible if he/she did not travel. Another student depicts his essay writing as watching an enjoyable film. These categories appear to corroborate the results of the studies (Fang, 2015; Shaw and Mahlios, 2014; Paulson and Armstrong, 2011; Hart, 2009) in which a considerable number of student perceived learning essay writing as enjoyable and interesting.

THEMES OF METAPHORS WITH NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING ESSAY WRITING

The majority of metaphors formulated represent a negative attitude toward learning essay writing. The negative attitude of learners was observed in the metaphors pointing out how overwhelming and painful learning essay writing is for some learners. The students' negative metaphors are under different themes such as "job", "fear", "torture", "weather", "chore" and "evaluation". The metaphors under these themes imply a negative perception of the learners regarding the concept of learning essay writing. Such metaphors show their unpleasant feelings and dislike of learning essay writing. So much so that some compared it to a cloudy day, a nightmare, a night of no sleep, torture, tedious job, and driving a stick shift. The metaphors under these previous themes reveal that learning essay writing is confusing and mostly difficult to deal with.



This negative ideology about the learning essay writing in this bilingual context reflects the probable impacts of several affective variables such as inhibition, anxiety, lack of self-esteem and motivation, and fear of language learning. The negative perceptions above correspond to that reached in earlier studies by Wan (2012) and Hart (2009) who report that students depict writing tasks as a nightmare, cleaning dust, chore and practical driving test that highlighted their students' negative attitude towards learning essaywriting.

FINDINGS RELATED TO THE THIRD RESEARCH QUESTION

The third research question sought to understand to what extent the study findings (the metaphors produced by students) concur with theoretical approaches of teaching and learning essay writing.

In the ESL/EFL classroom, the teaching and learning of writing has been a longstanding problem among teachers as well as students. Studies that have been conducted in this area can be categorized according to three major theoretical approaches. Al Beshher (2012) identified these three approaches as the traditional product oriented approach, the process oriented approach and the genre oriented approach to teaching and learning of writing.

THE PROCESS-ORIENTED APPROACH

The views that the participants hold about learning essay writing played an essential role in the way the metaphors were produced. The elicited metaphors inform us about learners' implicit theories of essay learning. Some of the data displayed a tendency towards the process approach to learning essay writing by describing the process of learning as being dependent on practice producing the written products rather than on the products themselves. In the end, learners surely need to and are required to complete their products, yet the writing process itself is stressed more. By focusing on the writing process, learners come to understand themselves more, and find how to work through the writing.

According to the results of the study, the majority of the metaphors produced by students about essay learning are attributed to the process-oriented approach of essay learning. For example, the metaphors under the "construction", "Knitting" and "food" themes can be reminiscent of process approach, e.g., Learning essay writing is like constructing a building, building a house, making a sandwich and baking a cake. To build a house or make a cake, you have to follow different steps, the same as writing. In writing an essay, there are many different steps you follow to write a good essay. Such

metaphorical representations produced by the participants go in accordance with the principles of the process approach which focuses on the steps that make up the act of writing. According to many researchers (Albeshher, 2012; Onozawa, 2007; Levin and Wagner, 2006), the process-oriented approach may include identified stages of the writing process such as: prewriting, writing and re-writing. According to this approach, teachers encourage students to focus on fluency rather than accuracy. The findings of the current study are compatible with those of Hart (2009) and Paulson and Armstrong (2011), Wan (2012) and Mahlios and Shaw (2014) which propound that good writers plan and revise, rearrange and delete text, re-reading and producing multiple drafts before they produce their finished document. This is what a process writing approach is about.

THE GENRE APPROACH

Few metaphors under the "freedom of expression", the "taste" and "art" themes are reminiscent of the genre approach for learning essay writing in the language learning endeavor. For example, some participants describe essay writing learning as an ice-cream, oil painting, wearing different clothes, or art and design. One of the interviewees who construct the metaphor "ice-cream" explains the reason for offering such metaphor in his entailment that "there are many different flavors for ice-cream, just like there are many different writing styles". Another interviewee clarifies the reason behind depicting learning essay writing to wearing clothes by saying "*all writing styles vary in one way or another. We all wear clothes according to what the weather is that day; we all write according to how we feel. Each one has his own style*".

A third interviewee who associates learning essay writing to designing necklace mention the reason behind offering such analogy by saying:

The artist' duty (the writer) is to design different shape and form of the necklace and string these beads. In my writing, I need to make sure the contents are logically connected."

Such elicited metaphors point out that the students are aware of the use of the genre approach which means different types of writing such as narrative, report, informal letter and so on (Levin and Wagner, 2006). Each of these has quite specific features in terms of organization and language, and the genre approach usually takes a model and gets the students to analyze these features, before producing something similar. This approach is based on examples of a particular genre. By framework is meant guiding students. The genre framework



supports students' writing with guiding principles about how to produce meaningful passages (Belinda, 2006). People using this approach interact to achieve social processes and they have goals of achieving particular things. However, the genre approach to writing still places a lot of emphasis on the context and purpose for which the writing is produced.

THE PRODUCT APPROACH

Some learners portray learning essay writing as a set of skills which needs practice such as learning to ride a bike; swimming, exercising, driving, cooking with recipe, adding ingredients when cooking, making sandwich' cleaning dust, doing chores, emerging sculpture, flower arrangement. In their entailments or the reasons to justify their associations of learning essay writing to such mentioned metaphors, the participants point out that learning different types of activities and learning essay writing were similar in several ways:

1. The learner (writer) needs to understand and grasp the basic skills and rules (writing conventions);
2. Basic skills and rules (writing conventions) are the prerequisite of managing the activity (essay);
3. It takes time to learn these skills and rules (writing conventions).

In these ways, the participants recognize the significance of grasping the academic conventions. They also recognize the value of practice to learn writing skills. For example one of the interviews says: *"The more you practice, the more comfortable you feel writing/running"*.

However, such elicited metaphors emphasize practice to get better in essay writing and go in accordance with the product approach which concerns with usage (syntax, spelling, punctuation) and with style (economy, clarity, emphasis); and so on' (Murray, 1980). It is called the 'product' approach because its aim was to produce correct texts. According to Nunan(1991), it concentrates on the appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax and cohesive devices. Other researchers believe that the product approach to writing concentrates mainly on helping students to learn grammatical rules and how to avoid errors and mistakes. For example, Belinda (2006) reports that 'product-based approaches see writing as mainly concerned with knowledge about the structure of language'.

DISCUSSION

Clearly, there is much work to be done in the application of metaphor analysis to research in language and education, particularly in uncovering learners' beliefs and understandings of their specific

language skills. It is hoped this study can be an early step and will serve to shed light on a meaningful framework within which to do so and a useful methodology for collecting and analyzing data for more extensive studies.

In general, the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the metaphors generated by the participants in the present study reveal that language learners have diverse thoughts, which are categorized in sixteen different themes. Each of these themes presents an aspect of the learning process of writing an essay and there is an uneven distribution of these metaphors among the themes. These aspects are further discussed in detail below.

-The participants recognize the importance of essay writing as a communicative tool. If people can understand what you write, then you can have endless possibilities of communication. This was clear in the metaphors represented under the theme of freedom of speech (See table 5).

-The results obtained were also examined in terms of their similarity or discrepancy with current designs of language approaches to essay writing.

The conceptualizations emerging from this study correspond to various approaches of writing. For example, in this study, student conceptions of writing an essay as seen from their spontaneous use of metaphors relate to all three approaches of writing: the product approach, the genre approach, and the process approach, suggesting that students' views of essay writing are affected by their awareness of their multiple identities (AlBeshar, 2012). For example, a large number of students depict essay writing as a construction process (See table 1). In their entailments, learners clarify recognize that both building a house and writing an essay follow different steps. There are many different steps you follow to get your final product. You must first draw up the plans and make sure that what you're building is on solid ground. Then you have to work very hard to establish your foundation, and add on from there. In writing, you follow some steps. You have your first draft, editing and revising, and then you form your final copy. This is an indication that English majors are aware of the process approach which consists of the pre-writing, drafting, revising and editing stages and the activities associated with these stages. This view sees writing as a recursive process with many sub-processes and where the distribution of cognitive activities during writing is not random but purposeful. This conception is aligned with Belinda's (2006) model of writing.

Student' metaphors also recall the model of writing as a text production process; particularly



those metaphors with themes of "sport" and "cooking" relating to motion, and which imply that the participants are aware with the product approach which focuses on areas of grammar, spelling or sentence structure through the writing process (See tables 2, 9). Rather, EFL teachers should be aware of language learners' ideologies and adapt the best teaching methods and approaches to meet the learners' need and tackle the likely language learning problems.

-Although it is quite small in number, there are also some students who perceive learning essay writing in a very positive way. Students in this group highlight the pleasure of learning essay writing by giving examples of activities they enjoy doing, for example, watching a movie, playing games, drawing a picture and making a necklace etc. Such elicited metaphors indicate that students find the learning process of writing an essay as a pleasurable and enjoyable activity. This metaphorical theme may imply the happiness of these students of the learning process, and may reflect their enjoyment and high motivation of learning essay writing.

-It is also noticeable that more than half of the participants' metaphors of learning essay writing imply the negative perceptions that the learners have. A large number of students perceive learning essay writing in a very negative way (See tables 14, 15, 16, 17). Metaphors in these tables indicate that students find the learning process of essay writing as a disturbing, harming and dangerous activity. This metaphorical theme may imply the fear and hatred of these students of the writing process, and may reflect their anxiety and low motivation of language learning.

Learners, who associate learning essay writing with negative ideas such as torture, fear, and weather in their images, may not have a clear idea about the nature of the writing process. Certainly, some demystification about the nature of writing skill and some functional and tangible emphasis can light their minds and remove their misconceptions about writing an essay as something airy-fairy and ultimately toiling.

-Interestingly, the results of the current study are in parallel with that of earlier studies that have dealt with students' metaphors of writing as one of the main language skills (Coskun, 2015; Shaw and Mahlios, 2014; Wan, 2012, Paulson and Armstrong, 2011; Hart, 2009; Levin and Wagner, 2006). This study is also similar to other studies that adopt the metaphor analysis as a reflective tool in which researchers attempt to elicit EFL learners' Beliefs (Asmalı and Çelik, 2017; Jitpranee, 2017; Fang, 2015;

Akbari, 2013; Farjami, 2012; Kesen, 2010; Lakoff and Johnson, 2003).

- In conclusion, this study has taken an exploratory step in the direction of examining the application of metaphor analysis to uncover participants' understandings of one language skill; specifically, it investigated learning essay writing among a group of Saudi English majors.

CONCLUSION

The study reported here was an attempt to investigate and analyze the metaphors that Saudi English majors formulated to describe the concept of "learning essay writing" through the use of metaphor as a research tool and a semi-structured interview. To this end, a metaphor elicitation questionnaire was administered to a convenient sample of 187 Saudi English majors at Qassim University. Using content analysis, the metaphorical expressions collected via completion of the metaphor prompt "Learning essay writing is (like) because" were structured into dominant thematic categories for further analysis. The total number of metaphors created by learners was 77. These metaphors were grouped under 16 dominant themes including "construction", "preparation", "cooking", "sport", "journey", "knitting", "taste", "art", "pleasure", "torture", "weather", "fear", "chore" and "preciousness". According to the results of the study, most of the learners found essay writing as an extremely difficult and arduous task. They associated the writing skill with activities, which are hard and require much time and effort to master. For example, some students used negative metaphors to depict writing. They said that essay writing English is a nightmare for them. On the other hand, less than half of students also see learning essay writing as an enjoyable activity. In general, the metaphors produced by the participants in the current study attested that the students were not wholly negative or positive but have diverse thoughts.

-The data collected through the interviews give emphasis to the results of the metaphor elicitation questionnaire. The results of the interviews enabled the determination of the positive and negative ideas of students on the concept of learning essay writing (Bas and Gezegin, 2015; Coskun, 2015; Shaw and Mahlios, 2014; Wan, 2012; Levin and Wagner, 2006). The findings of the current study were also consistent with the literature (Dincer, 2017; Jin and Cortazzi 2011; Paulson and Armstrong, 2011; Hart, 2009; Hinkel, 2005), most of the learners found writing was an extremely difficult and arduous task. Similarly, Based on the findings, i) teachers had the chance to learn about their students' hidden



perceptions on their learning essay writing, ii) the data obtained triggered the teachers to review and revise their teaching philosophies, approaches, and methods of teaching essay writing, iii) the study confirms the usefulness of using spontaneous metaphors as a research tool for exploring student views of writing or other educational concepts or processes, although interpreting the metaphors is not a simple task, iv) and the study needs to be replicated with a larger sample for the purpose of confirming the results. In addition, the participants in this study were all males, and therefore, the findings might not apply to female students. Further research could explore metaphors from female participants.

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