My Mind Became an Eclipse: Incorporating Metaphors in Narrative Writing Effectively

By

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigates what skills about writing narratives and metaphors are particularly challenging for the university students in an Intermediate English class. The research questions formulated for this study were: What happens when teachers incorporate metaphors when teaching writing at the college level? How can we incorporate the use of metaphors in a writing class at the college level? What are the pedagogical implications of teaching metaphors? In order to answer these three research questions, data was collected with the help of a pre-assessment, post-assessment, and student responses to open-ended questions. The results show that students struggled with writing narratives and metaphors and therefore needed practice within both. In accordance with these results, a thematic unit was designed to help students improve their writing narratives and metaphor skills.

Resumen

Este estudio cualitativo investiga qué destrezas sobre la escritura de narrativas y metáforas se le hace particularmente difícil a los estudiantes universitarios en una clase de inglés intermedia. Las preguntas de investigación formuladas para este estudio fueron: ¿Qué ocurre cuando maestros incorporan metáforas cuando enseñan escritura a nivel universitario? ¿Cómo podemos incorporar el uso de metáforas en una clase de escritura a nivel universitario? ¿Cuáles son las implicaciones pedagógicas de enseñar metáforas? Para poder contestar estas tres preguntas de investigación data fue recolectada con la ayuda de una pre-evaluación, post-evaluación y respuestas de estudiantes a preguntas abiertas. Los resultados demuestran que los estudiantes tuvieron dificultad en escribir narrativas y metáforas y necesitaban práctica en las dos. De acuerdo con los resultados, una unidad temática fue diseñada para ayudar a los estudiantes a mejorar sus destrezas de escritura de narrativas y metáforas.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents, Rosa N. Miranda Gonzalez and Teofilo Gonzalez
Echevarría, my niece, Joarie M. Miranda and both of my nephews, Ivaniel T. Miranda and Joniel
G. Miranda.

To my parents: thank you for your constant support and nagging me to finally get this done!
Without you guys this would not have been possible, you both inspire me to give my 100% in all
that I do. I hope I can continue to make you both proud. I love you both dearly!

To my babies: Joarie, Ivaniel and Joniel, thank you for brightening up my days when writer's
block would hit and being so understanding that Titi needed space to write and get her
"homework" done. All three of you are such a blessing and I adore you all. I thank God I have
the privilege of being your Titi. I hope that I can continue to be a role model for each of you.

I love all of you with all my heart!

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Chapter I: Introduction

Metaphors can be found in several aspects of our daily lives, whether in advertisements, music, movies, even in everyday conversations. We are constantly exposed to these comparisons to help paint a clearer picture in our minds of what is being said. This literary device is formally introduced to students in grade school, but since literary devices like metaphors are usually associated with poetry teachers often avoid teaching them at times because of their insecurities with poetry. As Calway (2008) mentions, "English teachers can be rather afraid of poetry, particularly at the secondary level where exam specifications are involved." Calway (2008) not only points out that teachers have insecurities with poetry, but he also states that their choice is also influenced by the specific expectations of standardized tests. For this reason, I believe that it is important to see what knowledge students have of metaphors before implementing a thematic unit on it. The integration of metaphors in writing allows students to improve their writing and their understanding of literature. If they are able to use metaphors in their writing, they will consequently be able to interpret the meaning of metaphors as well. There are several researchers who also believe that including metaphors in teaching is a valuable strategy which can help students learn; among these researchers are Mahon (1999), Bain (2004) and Lakoff & Johnson (2003).

As a teacher, I am always looking for ways to improve my teaching and adapting lessons to fit student's needs in order for them to learn the material, relate to it, reproduce it and retain it. Because of this, I am interested in incorporating food literature to this unit.

According to Mahon (1999), even Aristotle's believed metaphors were a valuable tool for teachers to incorporate in the classrooms. In fact, he believed people learned and understood things more clearly when explained through metaphors.

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What he has to say about how people can express themselves in a clearer and more attractive way through the use of metaphors is also extremely relevant to the concerns of contemporary theorists grappling with the problem of language teaching and learning, since it is Aristotle's view that people actually learn and understand things better through metaphors (Mahon, 1999).

Scholars like Ken Bain (2004), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) also have research, which uphold that metaphors are a key component to our everyday lives and speech, helping us understand things from the perspective of another. Associating two seemingly unlike things creates new knowledge students did not previously assimilate. When these types of connections are made students are able to see what the author is trying to convey more clearly.

In the upcoming chapters, we will see how this research sets out to answer the following research questions:

1. What happens when teachers incorporate metaphors when teaching writing at the college level?

2. How can we incorporate the use of metaphors in a writing class at the college level?

3. What are the pedagogical implications of teaching metaphors?

Chapter II: Review of Literature

The proposed study investigates how the integration of writing narratives and metaphors in an Intermediate English university class can improve their skills in writing narratives and metaphors. It primarily explores the uses of food literature when teaching narrative and metaphor skills to university students. As such, the following literature review includes relevant studies in the areas of metaphors, teaching and metaphors, understanding metaphors and food literature in English.

Metaphors

As cited in Ritchie (2013), Kenneth Burke (1945) defines metaphors as "a device for seeing something in terms of something else." Metaphors are part of figurative language, they bring a vivid image or connection the reader or listener was unable to see beforehand. They are used in education to introduce information or to start discussions on a particular topic, as well as, to help break down information or material in a way students can visualize and understand what is being taught (Bain, 2004). According to Burke (1999):

> If we employ the "character" as a general term for whatever can be thought of as
>
> distinct (any thing, pattern, situation, structure, nature, person, object, act, role,
>
> process, event, etc.,) then we could say that metaphor tells us something about
>
> one character as considered from the point of view of another character. And to
>
> consider A from the point of view of B is, of course, to use B as a perspective
>
> upon A.

This definition of metaphors, although it might seem confusing at first, it clearly explains how metaphors are used to explain something else from the point of view of another. In this study, the teacher had students try to see A through the point of view of B and vice versa.

Therefore, metaphors are used in a variety of different ways, have multiple definitions and can even be categorized.

Jensen (2006) states there are four different types of metaphors: active, inactive, dead and foundational. In an effort to better understand the different categories that exist in metaphors, a definition and example will be provided for each. Active metaphors, according to Jensen (2006), "carry metaphoric saliency between the topic and vehicle terms." The example Jensen (2006) provides is "This school is a real melting pot." Anyone who is familiar with the topic which in this case is the school and the vehicle term, melting pot can easily make the connection between both. Therefore, active metaphors are those metaphors that are almost universal to the listener; they are able to catch on to the meaning instantly without a doubt of the meaning it holds. On the contrary, inactive metaphors are those metaphors that have the listener thinking twice because of the several meanings the vehicle term may connote. The example provided in the article for inactive metaphors is "The car race ended in a massacre." There could be multiple meanings interpreted by the listener when hearing this metaphor, because of the different meanings given to the word massacre. It can be used to exaggerate how well the car racer did on the track; he possibly won by a huge advantage. The other meaning that can be interpreted from this inactive metaphor is there was a horrific accident towards the end of the race which caused several fatalities. Consequently, the meaning of inactive metaphors depends on the listeners' experiences and the definition they give the vehicle term. The third category are dead metaphors, which "have lost resonance, as the saliency between the topic and vehicle terms are now inaccessible because of a lack of knowledge or experience with the characteristics of the vehicle term" (Jensen, 2006). These are basically metaphors that have lost their meaning because the vehicle term that was being used is obsolete or not as common as it once was. The example given in the

article is "Working downtown is a real rat race." This metaphor was coined when scientists did their studies using rats in mazes; but now because people rarely know this, it has become more of a "common expression, colloquialism or idiom" (Jensen, 2006).

The last and fourth category is foundational metaphors, or "deep surface" metaphors, as Schön (1983) refers to it (as cited in Jensen, 2006). "A deep metaphor is a metaphor that defines the centrally important features of the concept being studied. Schön indicated that deep metaphors form the basis on which all subsequent surface-level metaphors are formed" (Jensen, 2006).

For the purpose of this study the active, inactive and dead categories of metaphors were utilized in the classroom. According to Fawson & Reutzal (1994), "for saliency to exist, the listener must approach the metaphor with some preexisting knowledge, and the listener must be able to identify the shared characteristics between the topic and vehicle terms." Therefore, having previous knowledge of the vehicle term is important for the listener to understand the meaning of the metaphor. When this happens the metaphor becomes a "natural expression of our perceptions" (Jensen, 2006).

Teaching and Metaphors

Mahon (1999) sites Ortony (1979): "any serious study of metaphor is almost obliged to start with the works of Aristotle." Mahon introduces the reader to what has been interpreted from Aristotle's works on metaphor and then rejects these views, because they are (according to him and other scholars) incorrect. "Such studies always insist that Aristotle undervalued metaphor and believed it to be merely an ornamental extra in language" (Mahon, 1999). The studies basically refer to metaphors as being verbosity in language, in accordance to their interpretations of Aristotle's findings. These misinterpretations of Aristotle's works have caused several

scholars to discontinue their research within the materials by Aristotle which discuss metaphors, like *Rhetoric*. According to Mahon (1999):

"Aristotle, it turns out, holds a position on the ubiquity of metaphor in conversation and writing which supports current views about the omnipresence of metaphor in everyday discourse and the print media. What he has to say about how people can express themselves in a clearer and more attractive way through the use of metaphors is also extremely relevant to the concerns of contemporary theorists grappling with the problem of language teaching and learning, since it is Aristotle's view that people actually learn and understand things better through metaphors."

Mahon states here that the use of metaphors in everyday speech and writing help bring a clearer image to what is being explained while also catching the attention of the listener or reader. According to Mahon's interpretation of Aristotle's works, he believes people learn and understand things better through the use of metaphors. Which brings me to the question posed in this research, what happens when teachers incorporate metaphors when teaching writing at the college level? Aristotle substantiates that metaphors are a useful method to help students learn and understand things. According to Mahon (1999):

"We learn above all from metaphors. When Homer compares old age to wheat stubble, he makes us realize and understand that both wheat stubble and old age belong to the genus of things that have lost their vigor… we are attracted by those things which we understand as soon as they are said or very soon afterwards, even though we had no knowledge of them before, for then there is a learning process or something very like it" (Rhetoric 3, 10: 1410b; Grube p. 89) (Mahon, 1999).

Metaphors help bring a vivid picture to the readers mind, which helps them make connections to things they know and understand in order to describe something. Metaphors make connections to everyday things or situations people know and understand. When you compare two things that seem unlike but make sense it grabs readers attention and gets them thinking.

Metaphors are not only used to explain something in terms of another in writing, but they are also incorporated into the introduction of topics to help students form a basis from which they can add on and develop in further lessons (Bain, 2004). Bringing these metaphors to the classroom helps break the information into understandable parts for students when introducing a topic, or difficult skill or theory. According to Mahon (1999):

> "People are attracted to metaphors precisely because they learn new things from them, seeing connections where previously they had not seen any. Metaphors bring things vividly 'before the eyes' of listeners or readers, and the pleasing mental effort required to understand them makes them memorable" (Mahon, 1999).

The use of metaphors in writing is of great value to students because they are able to express their ideas with accurate examples of the world to help readers visualize their stories. Metaphors are used in several subject areas and grade levels. They can be used in mathematics, language arts, teacher preparation programs and in any subject area. According to Donovan (2008), "the most effective metaphors trigger our senses by connecting an otherwise intangible subject to sight, sound, smell, touch, or taste." Furthermore, the use of metaphors and language teaching needs to be explored in further detail in the context of college students in a language classroom.

Understanding Metaphors

One of the reasons I decided to study metaphors and food literature is because within education we teach so many skills using food as a metaphor. For example, when teaching writing many times teachers use a hamburger as a visible representation for the introduction (top bun), body paragraphs (lettuce, tomato and meat) and conclusion (bottom bun). Ketchup, mayonnaise and mustard are used to represent literary devices that add flavor to our paragraphs and for the majority of students, this clarifies a lot of their doubts. Using that metaphor to teach writing allows students to understand the information, but many times we ask our students what a metaphor is, and they confuse them with similes or they have difficulty recalling what metaphors are. Contrary to what many may believe we use metaphors on a daily basis, in everyday conversations and we understand one another clearly. The same thing occurs when reading, the vast majority of the time when something is described or emphasized with a metaphor, we understand it quickly. We understand metaphors quickly because we attribute the characteristics of what is being compared and deduce what is trying to be implied through it.

According to Johnson (1996), "metaphors take less time to understand in class-inclusion form, such as *my lawyer is a shark*, than in simile form, such as *my lawyer is like a shark*." Johnson (1996) deduced this from the study conducted by Glucksberg & Keysar (1990) which "tested the theory using reaction time latencies calculated during a modified context-sentence verification task." Glucksberg & Keysar (1990) exposed their participants to 48 two sentence sets consecutively. "The task involved reading the priming sentence and pressing a key to indicate comprehension, then reading a test sentence and indicating whether it logically followed or did not logically follow the prime sentence. The results showed that metaphor sentences were comprehended significantly faster than simile sentences and that this difference was not

accounted for by sentence length" (Johnson, 1996). What they found was that metaphors were understood almost immediately and because of this they believe that "metaphors are attributive assertions, not comparisons" (Glucksberg, 1998). Through this research we are able to see that metaphors are easily understood by people, we hear or read metaphors and are able to understand what is being explained quickly. It is interesting to read that not only are metaphors quickly understood, but even more so than similes.

Furthermore, this study aims to see how students are able to not only understand metaphors, but also include them within their writing effectively. In the upcoming chapters we will see how well the students were able to understand what metaphors are and how to include them within their narratives successfully.

Food Literature in English Writing Courses

Incorporating food into educational materials is not as farfetched as some might believe. Ever since I can remember, teachers have used pizza, ice cream cones, hamburgers, sandwiches, cookies, cupcakes and all sorts of foods to teach in the classroom not only in English but several other subjects as well. Food is something that everyone can relate to, so it is understandable why teachers choose to incorporate it within their lessons. It is unavoidable, a part of our everyday life and the majority of people enjoy eating; hence we should take advantage of this and use it to benefit our students in the classroom.

As part of this investigation, I was interested in focusing the unit on food literature. As dysfunctional as it may sound, food is normally something that unites people and cultures. Therefore, I thought students would have an easier time understanding metaphors and narratives that related to food. Once I started researching food literature, I came upon an article by Professor Cognard-Black and Goldthwaite (2008) that included a plethora of examples of how

food literature can be incorporated within a university course effectively. These two professors teach courses that read, discuss and analyze food literature, they also have their students create their own food literature and even cook some recipes from their readings (Cognard-Black & Goldthwaite, 2008). After reading this, I knew that I could use food literature within my investigation without hesitation.

As mentioned above, there are several courses offered at different universities that focus on food literature, not only reading different types of food literature but also focused on writing and developing their own food literature (Cognard-Black & Goldthwaite, 2008). According to Cognard-Black & Goldthwaite (2008), among professors in academia these courses are predominantly viewed as having little to no substantial value in the literature field; they question the significance of food literature and whether it should even be considered literature at all. "We have discovered that there is an inherent distrust of a class in which food is taken seriously---read, discussed, written about, cooked, and consumed (Cognard-Black & Goldthwaite, 2008). These two professors have created two courses at their respective universities that focus on reading, analyzing, discussing, cooking and writing about food literature. The article by Cognard-Black & Goldthwaite (2008), also indicates that although they teach similar courses their focus of the type of literature incorporated is a bit different: Prof. Goldthwaite offers more on poetry and nonfiction prose, whereas Prof. Cognard-Black focuses more on fiction and film.

"To teach food as a written art form is to teach a part of what it means to be human" (Cognard-Black, 2008). Part of the reason why I chose food literature is because it is something that everyone can relate to, we all have to eat it because it is a natural biologic need in order to survive. Food is a topic that all students are familiar with, therefore by using it in the classroom students will be able to relate to the stories they read in some way, shape or form. The works of

literature might even include foods that students have previously never tried or heard of, but students will be able to relate regardless of this because they will be able to compare it to their own experiences with different foods. In addition, food in many works of literature is used as a metaphor for something else. Such as the prologue of *When I was Puerto Rican* by Esmeralda Santiago, the excerpt is titled *How to Eat a Guava* and it compares the guavas to the main characters childhood in Puerto Rico and pears to her adulthood in New York. Although students may not eat guavas, they can associate this fruit with something else that may remind them of their childhood.

Including food literature within the thematic unit was done in order to focus on a subject that the students could relate to. Having the students write their pre-assessment and post-assessment essay within a 90-minute class is not a simple task. Therefore, I believe that by including a subject, like food, in which the student has a plethora of memories would make their life a little easier when writing. Without that focus, I believe students would have great difficulty deciding what to write about within their pre and post assessments.

Chapter III: Methodology

This section discusses and justifies my case study. In this section, I will describe the research site, time period and include a description of my sampling strategies and participants. It also details the techniques or methods used for data collection and discusses validity as an important factor for my research. Finally, it explains possible ethical issues and how I will address them if encountered.

The time period of my research was about 4 weeks. The study was conducted in one intermediate level English course at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez campus (UPRM) during the first semester of the 2015-2016 academic year. The reason why I decided to conduct the research with these students is because I had access to where the research was conducted and also acceptance by the director of the English Department whose permission I needed before embarking on the study (see Appendix A).

Research Design

The research I conducted was completed through a case study, which allowed me to design and implement a unit using metaphors in narratives and assess student's outcome. "Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system…through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case themes" (Creswell, 2013). The case study was conducted with the students I was teaching, I collected the data throughout the four weeks I administered the pre and post assessment and implemented the unit with them.

Throughout this case study, I administered a pre-assessment, created and implemented a thematic unit based on the pre-assessment scores, administered a post-assessment and had the students answer open-ended questionnaires on their experience of the unit to obtain the

information needed to answer the research questions. The methods for data collection include a pre-assessment essay and post-assessment essay. It also included an open-ended questionnaire which served as a final reflection of student's experience regarding the implementation of the unit and the use of food metaphors in narratives.

Context of the Study

During my experience teaching as a graduate teaching assistant (GTA) I noticed there are a variety of students who enter the Intermediate track from both public and private schools from around the island. There is also a wide variety of English comprehension in the class, there are students who do extremely well reading, writing, listening and speaking, but there are also students who passed by a very small margin who struggle in the class. Intermediate English I (INGL 3103) is the first course of a series designed for entering students at the Mayagüez Campus of the University of Puerto Rico who have scored 570 or above on the College Board Entrance Examination. Those students who receive 3 on this test are enrolled in English 3103 (INGL 3103). Students who successfully pass INGL 3103 must also pass INGL 3104 and six additional credit hours in the English department courses to satisfy university requirements.

INGL 3103 is a writing course that focuses on three genres of writing: rhetorical analysis, argumentative, and narrative/reflective essays. Instead of taking exams students are required to write these three types of essays to assess their learning in these three types of writing. Therefore, they put into practice what is being actively taught in the course.

Participants

For this research, purposive sampling is the ideal form of collecting and analyzing data. In this type of sampling, participants who meet the precise characteristics the researcher is soliciting are directly chosen (Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K., 2007). Purposive sampling

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was used because I was not just using any group of INGL 3103 students, I used my own

students. I believe that this was beneficial to the study because the data was not affected by

students feeling pressured to do well or answer a certain way because an observer is in the

classroom. I implemented the unit mid-semester in order for the students to feel comfortable in

the classroom and with me as their professor. According to Cohen et al., (2007):

> there is little benefit in seeking a random sample when most of the random sample
>
> may be largely ignorant of particular issues and unable to comment on matters of
>
> interest to the researcher, in which case a purposive sample is vital. Though they
>
> may not be representative, and their comments may not be generalizable, this is
>
> not the primary concern in such sampling; rather the concern is to acquire in-
>
> depth information from those who are in a position to give it.

My sampling consisted of approximately 20 undergrad students (one section) from the

University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez. Participants were selected from the class (focus group).

The students were enrolled in INGL 3103, Intermediate English I. The majority of them should

have been first year students, but there are students who may have been taking the class over

who might be sophomores or juniors. Their ages were between 18 and 21 years old. I selected

this population because I was teaching this course as a graduate teaching assistant.

The majority of the students in my classroom were males, therefore the majority of those

who agreed to participate in the study were male students, with a total of 20 students who

participated: 6 females and 14 males.

Ethical Issues

Students who participated in the study were required to sign a consent form detailing the

study that took place in the class. If students did not sign the consent form their work was not

used in this investigation. It is an ethical procedure to obtain the consent (See Appendix B) and cooperation of my participants. Students were not forced in taking part of the study and students who did not take part in the study were not penalized for it. Therefore, the participants' rights were taken into consideration throughout this study. Privacy was also very important in my research, I worked with sensitive information in a public educational setting, while recollecting and disseminating data. Confidentiality was kept of each student's identity, for this reason assigned numbers were used when referring to students within this research.

Data Collection

Since this was a qualitative study, results emerged from the data. Therefore, I did not aim to make any generalizations nor did this research attempt to make predictions or formulate a hypothesis of the results and outcomes. Data Analysis is very important aspect of any study, in order to validate this qualitative research, it is important to analyze the data in an unbiased detailed manner. Therefore, data analysis of the pre-assessment and post-assessment were done through a rubric I adapted from Turnitin Common Core Writing Rubrics (See Appendix E) which was used to assess students use of metaphors in their narrative essays. Also, three independent scorers assessed the essays using the rubric for reliability purposes. The scores obtained of the pre-assessment and post-assessment serve to determine if the students successfully incorporated metaphors to describe or narrate their stories. Not only will the metaphor incorporation be taken into account in these scores, but because this is an essay some other aspects were also taken into account: grammar, parts of a narrative and MLA formatting.

Data from the open-ended questionnaire were coded in order to determine the perceptions of students and how the unit can be improved to help students incorporate metaphors in their writing. The themes emerged from the data collected.

Triangulation was used in this study in an effort to increase the credibility of the outcome and prove its validity. "Triangulation in research increases the credibility of the research by drawing on multiple viewpoints" (Murphy, 2011). For this study, the most efficient way of collecting data to answer the research questions formulated is via pre-assessment and post-assessment essays, open-ended questionnaires for students and a unit created based on the results of the pre-assessments.

Pre-assessment Essay

The pre-assessment or diagnostic assessment (see Appendix C) was a prompt. The students were asked to write about 500 to 700-word essay on a particular topic where they had to include 6-10 metaphors in their narrative. The prompt for the pre-assessment read as follows:

> Narrate a 500 to 700-word essay on a bad experience cooking or a bad memory you have of food in your life. (for example: one meal you hated eating, failed trying a new recipe, lunch food, food at someone's house, burnt your dinner, bad experience at a fast food, etc.) Use 6-10 metaphors to enhance your story, help the reader paint a picture in their minds; be sure to underline your metaphors in order to find them easily. Also, your essay must be in MLA format.

I chose to have students write about a specific topic, having used food literature throughout the unit I thought it would only be appropriate to have them write about a bad food experience they may have had. Within the prompt I even gave the students examples of situations they could focus on, narrative writing is all about setting up your stage (exposition), using details to describe your setting and the problem/situation at hand. If students developed their story effectively, they would have enough information to write a 500 to 700-essay on the topic.

A rubric (see Appendix E) was used to grade these essays on their effective use of metaphors and their skills in writing a narrative. I created my thematic unit based on the student's outcome on this diagnostic assessment.

Thematic Unit

The unit was created based on the results of the pre-assessment essay, after finding out what previous knowledge students have of metaphors and narrative essays. Therefore, the general objectives of the unit were based on these diagnostic results. Throughout this unit I used food narratives and literature to help explain how effective narratives are written utilizing metaphors. I decided to use food narratives because they are more likely to include metaphors to help describe taste or smells. My preliminary outline of this unit was to explain what metaphors are in detail, give examples and have students include metaphors in their writing. The subsequent lessons would be focused on reading and identifying metaphors within the text and having students practice writing using metaphors. Until I got in the classroom and administered the pre-assessment, I did not have a concrete unit created.

Post-Assessment Essay

After implementing the thematic unit, the post-assessment was administered. The post-assessment (see Appendix D) was also be a prompt on a similar topic to the one used in the pre-assessment with the same requirements and rubric. The students were asked to write an essay of about 500 to 700 words on a particular topic where they needed to include 6-10 metaphors in their narrative essay. The prompt for the post-assessment read as follows:

Narrate a 500 to 700-word essay on a good experience cooking or a good memory you have of food in your life. (for example: one meal you love(d) eating or making, success trying a new recipe, holiday cooking, best meal you have ever had or made, family

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traditions, etc.) Use 6-10 metaphors to enhance your story, help the reader paint a picture

in their minds; be sure to underline your metaphors in order to find them easily. Also,

your essay must be in MLA format.

The same rubric (see Appendix E) utilized to grade the pre-assessment was used to grade the

post-assessment essays on their effective use of metaphors and their skills in writing a narrative,

as well.

Open-ended Questionnaire

Opened-ended questionnaires (Appendix B) were provided for the students to answer.

"Questionnaires are tools for collecting information…" (Tymms, 2012). These particular

questionnaires collected a type of feedback as well as student recommendations. (Appendix A).

The open-ended questionnaires were used to get feedback from the students on their experience

of the unit, whether they found it helped improve their incorporation of metaphors in their

writing and any suggestions they may have for improving the unit. The answers for these

questions helped give an inside view of what students thought of the unit and help to make any

future adjustments needed to it. I analyzed the student's responses to the questions and looked

for patterns within their answers, I was surprised to see how many students shared similar views

on the unit I implemented in the class. The results of the data collected and analyzed are presented

in chapters five and six.

Chapter IV: Thematic Unit

After reviewing the results of the pre-assessments, I was able to conclude that my students had a variety of comprehension levels within metaphors and narrative writing skills. Therefore, I decided to start from the basic information of narrative writing and metaphors and work my way up to the skills I wanted them to master by the end of the unit. I created PowerPoint presentations with basic information on metaphors, the general definition, examples, characteristics of metaphors and how they are used within literature. In addition, I also created a PowerPoint presentation with the basic information of narrative essays, the characteristics of them and examples of narratives. Narratives and memoirs have similarities, since memoirs are a sub-genre of narratives, therefore I also included an excerpt from a famous memoir book which included various types of literary devices within the written piece.
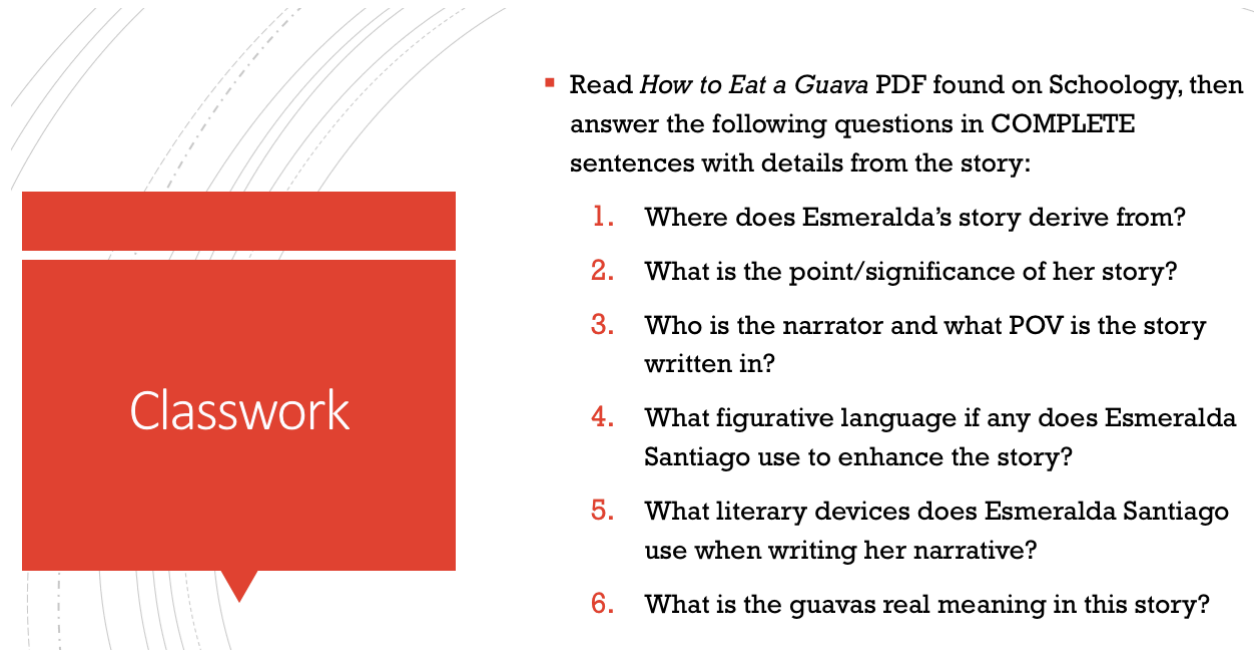
Unit Activities

Understanding Narratives and Plot Structure

After realizing that there was a variation in knowledge of how to effectively construct a narrative essay, I decided to create two PowerPoint presentations, one with the elements of a story and another with the attributes of narratives.

I initiated the unit by going over the parts of a narrative, this was done purposely to provide a basis for the unit. I believe that the students understanding the type of writing they would be working with was crucial information that could be built upon with the other information that would be provided throughout the unit. Therefore, I began by breaking down narratives. When the writer uses the narrative technique, he or she must be sure to include all the conventions of storytelling: a plot, characters, a setting, vivid descriptions and a reflective ending. After going over each of these attributes found in narrative essays, I had the students

read *How to Eat a Guava* by Esmeralda Santiago and answer some questions identifying whether Esmeralda Santiago incorporated some the narrative attributes discussed in class. Below you can see a screenshot of the slide with the activity questions, students jotted them into their notebooks, and we discussed the answers verbally before the class culminated.

Classwork

- Read *How to Eat a Guava* PDF found on Schoology, then answer the following questions in COMPLETE sentences with details from the story:
    1. Where does Esmeralda's story derive from?
    2. What is the point/significance of her story?
    3. Who is the narrator and what POV is the story written in?
    4. What figurative language if any does Esmeralda Santiago use to enhance the story?
    5. What literary devices does Esmeralda Santiago use when writing her narrative?
    6. What is the guavas real meaning in this story?

Once the students completed this activity, I went over the answers with them as a class and held a discussion on why their answers were correct or incorrect. This was a formative assessment to see how the students were grasping the information from the PowerPoint and discussion held in class.

After going over narrative attributes, I felt that to build upon narratives I would go over the specific elements of a story which included: characters, theme, setting, conflict, point of view and plot which encompasses the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution. While going over these elements I would try to reference back to the *How to Eat a Guava* memoir excerpt from Esmeralda Santiago's *When I Was Puerto Rican* that I used as an example in the activity for the narrative attributes PowerPoint.

Setting

- Physical setting is where the story takes place. The "where" can be very general, "a small farm," or very specific, "a two story white frame house at 8895 NW 26 Court in Coral Springs, FL."

- Chronological setting is the "when," and can be equally general or specific. (year, date, holiday, etc.)

What was the setting in How to Eat a Guava?

After going through each of the story elements I decided to have the students identify the elements discussed within the Grimm brother's version of Hansel and Gretel. Students completed this activity in their notebooks, and we discussed their findings before leaving the class.

Activity

- Read Hansel and Gretel by the Grimm Brothers provided on Schoology
- Take out a piece of paper and identify the elements of the story discussed today

These were formative assessments to see how the students were grasping the information from the PowerPoint's and discussions held in class. Through our discussions and listening to

their responses I realized which students were picking up on the lessons quickly and which students were struggling.

Understanding and Identifying Metaphors

Like narratives I had a fluctuation in pre-assessment scores within metaphors, therefore I decided it would be best to start from zero and go up from there. Students had a vast variation in the understanding of metaphors. I had several students who were completely unaware of what a metaphor was, but I also had students who were well aware of what a metaphor is and how to use it in their writing. I decided to start off the metaphor portion of the thematic unit with a PowerPoint presentation I created with the definition of a metaphor which is a indirect comparison that compares two unlike things. Some of the examples I included were:

"America is a melting pot."

"Life is a rollercoaster."

"Their home was a prison."

"Baby, you're a firework."

The point of using simple and easy to understand metaphors as examples was so students could realize, even if they did not remember what a metaphor was for the pre-assessment, at some point they had heard at least one of these examples. Subconsciously, we utilize metaphors in our everyday life, therefore it was a matter of getting the students refamiliarized with the concept. In this PowerPoint I felt that it was important to address the difference between a simile and a metaphor, because I know students struggle distinguishing one from the other. Therefore, I included the definition, examples and even gave them a tip I learned in grade school that simile includes the letters L, I, & S from "like" or "as," which must be a part of the comparison in order to be a simile. Afterwards, I had students identify whether or not 6 examples provided at the end

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of the PowerPoint were examples of similes or metaphors. I gave the students about 5-8 minutes

to read through and jot down their answers. Then, I went through each of the examples having

students tell me what they believed each was and what was being compared in the examples.

After verifying that students understood the difference between metaphors and similes, I

had the students work on an assignment where they would incorporate 4 metaphors and 1 simile

into a food memoir narrative. In addition to the figurative language students had to incorporate

the elements of a story and narrative attributes discussed in previous classes. Students completed

this assignment on a separate sheet of paper and turned them in at the end of the class. Below

you can see a screenshot of the instructions provided within the PowerPoint presentation.

ACTIVITY

- Think of ANOTHER bad meal or bad cooking experience you had and come up with 4 metaphors and 1 simile to describe the meal or situation you went through.
- Now write a short story on THIS bad cooking or bad meal experience you had. Use ALL 4 metaphors and simile in the story.
- Remember to include all the parts of a short story we've been going over… Characters, Setting, Conflict, POV, Theme/Significance; PLOT: Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action and Resolution.

Formative Assessments

As previously mentioned, throughout the unit I displayed the information to the students

via PowerPoint presentations and class discussions. After completing the PowerPoint

presentations and discussions, I would have the students work on formative assessments to make

sure they understood the information and skills discussed during that class. Some of the formative assessments included were identifying literary devices within *How to Eat a Guava* by Esmeralda Santiago. In addition, I had the students work on identifying the elements of the story within the Grimm brother version of *Hansel and Gretel*. Lastly, creating metaphors and using said metaphors within their writing was the final formative assessment I gave the students. This assignment was an overall assessment of all of the skills I had taught throughout my unit and their completion of it was important in understanding whether they had been able to understand the material or whether further exploration of the skills was necessary. For the most part students did fairly well on the paragraph they were asked to write, which is why I decided to go ahead and administer the post-assessment.

Chapter V: Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data collected, this section was divided into a mixed methodological approach of quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data consisted of the pre-assessment and post-assessment essays. The qualitative data consisted of the open-ended questions responses. As previously mentioned, the pre and post assessment essays were graded using a rubric and the open-ended questionnaires were analyzed by looking at the commonalities and patterns within the student responses.

The pre-assessment or diagnostic assessment (see Appendix C) was a prompt. The students were supposed to write about 500 to 700 words on a particular topic, which in this case was a bad experience with food where they needed to include 6-10 metaphors in their narrative. A rubric (see Appendix E) was used to grade these essays on their effective use of metaphors and their skills in writing a narrative. I created my thematic unit depending on the student's outcome on this diagnostic assessment. After implementing the thematic unit, the post-assessment was then administered. The post-assessment (see Appendix D) was also a prompt on a similar topic to the one used in the pre-assessment, but this time it was a good experience with food with the same requirements of 6-10 metaphors. The same rubric was used to score the pre-assessment and post-assessment of this study.

Pre-assessment Data Analysis

Graph 1: Pre-Assessment Data
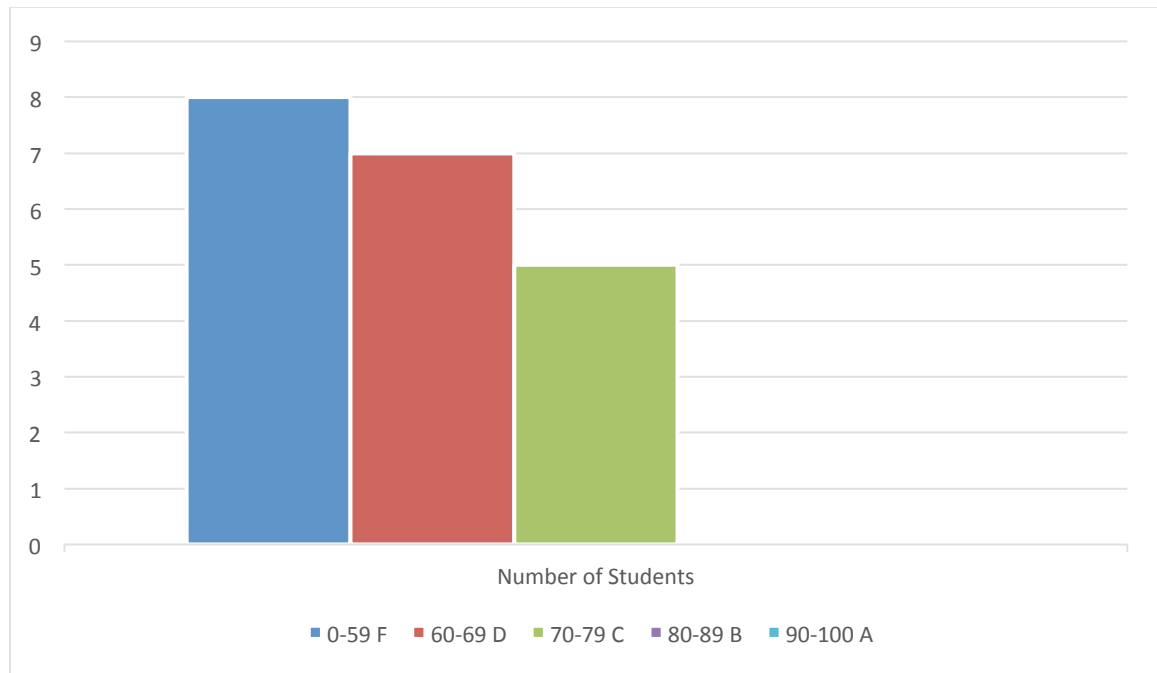
After grading all of the pre-assessments I realized the average score throughout the

essays was a 61.3%, which makes the letter grade a D. The lowest score within the pre-

assessment essays acquired by a male was a 28/80 points who scored a 35%, which is an F in

letter grades. The highest score within the pre-assessment essays was by a female who received a

63/80 points who scored a 79%, which is a C+ in letter grades. The score that was acquired most

often was a 52/80 which is a 65% D, four of twenty students scored this grade on the pre-

assessment essay. Three of the four students who scored 65% D were males, leaving one female

who also scored 65% D.

These scores prove that there is a variety of comprehension levels within my Intermediate

English at UPRM as discussed in the Methodology and Thematic Unit chapter. Most

importantly, the scores in the above graph prove the majority of the students within my study did

not fully master how to write narratives or how to write and use metaphors effectively within their writing.

What this meant for my narrative and metaphor unit (see Appendix F and Chapter IV) was that I had to start from the basics because of the fluctuation in mastery with metaphors and narratives. Therefore, I decided to start from the bottom and work up to the objectives expected of the students.

Pre-assessment/Post-assessment Results: Narrative Writing Skills

Graph 2: Narrative Writing Score Comparison of Pre-assessment/Post-assessment
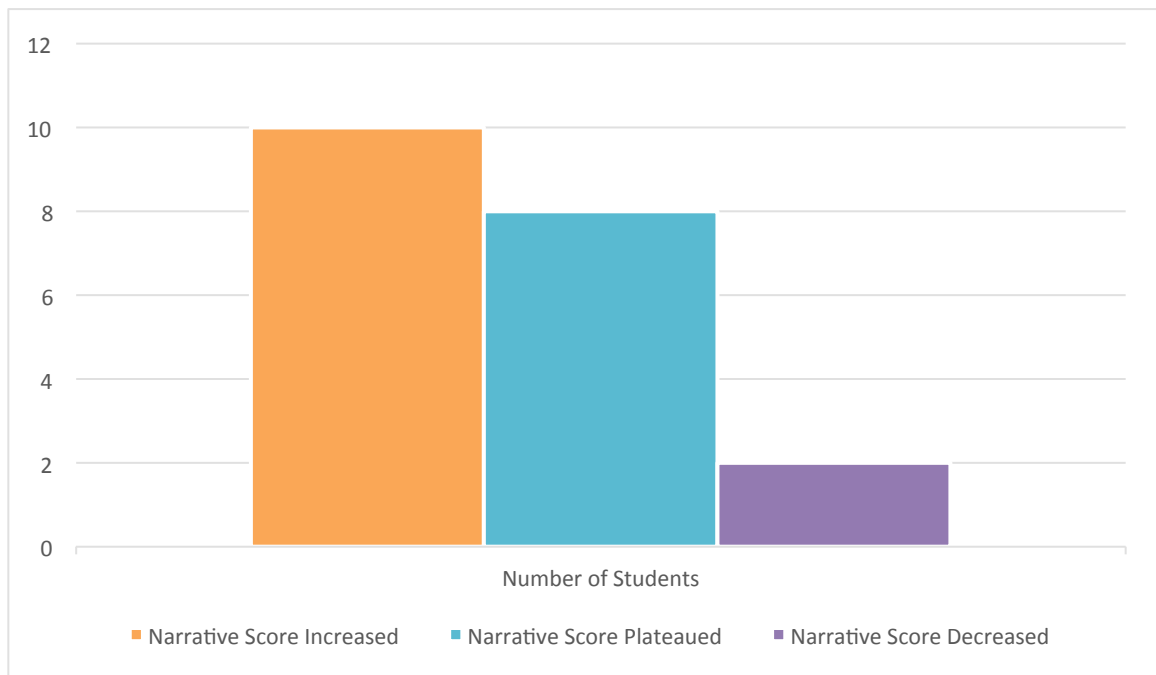
The graph above (Graph 2: Narrative Writing Score Comparison of Pre-assessment/Post-assessment) has been included to help in highlighting the narrative writing skill score. Analyzing the improvements or lack thereof is important to this research because the focus of this study is on the development of narrative and metaphor writing skills. Therefore, the above graph depicts the improvement, if any, of students' knowledge in writing an effective narrative essay, exactly

10 students were capable of increasing their narrative writing score from pre-assessment to post-assessment, specifically 9 male and 1 female. The two students with the biggest increase were both males and they had a 6-point increase from pre-assessment to post-assessment. As in many research projects, there are always those subjects who plateau and do not gain or lose anything from the study. In this case study, I had 8 students whose scores remained the same within their narrative writing portion that being 5 female and 3 male students. Unfortunately, there were two males whose scores decreased by a few points within their narrative writing score from pre-assessment to post-assessment.

The variation within improvements or lack thereof can be attributed to a number of things, student's inability to put down their phones and pay attention, student attendance, students not understanding explanations in English because of their native Spanish speaking background.

Pre-assessment/Post-assessment Results: Writing Metaphor Skills

Graph 3: Metaphor Score Comparison of Pre-assessment/Post-assessment

Number of Students

■ Metaphor Score Increased ■ Metaphor Score Plateaued ■ Metaphor Score Decreased
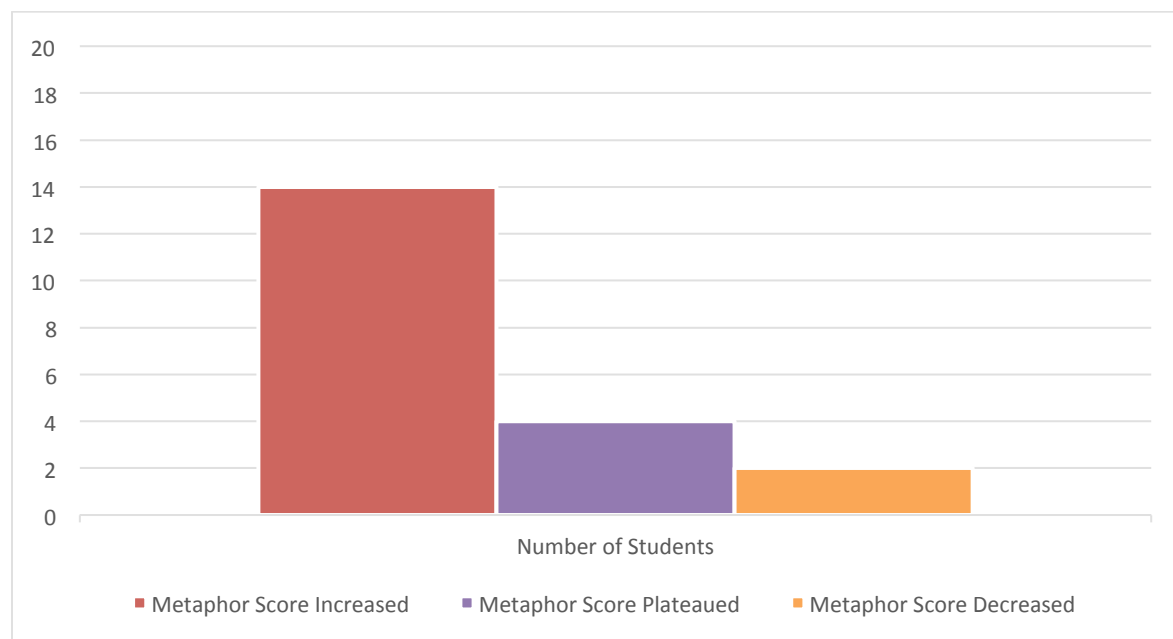
As previously mentioned, the focus of my study is not only to focus on the narrative writing skills but to also see how students may have improved their metaphor writing skills. Within the graph (shown above, Graph 3: Metaphor Score Comparison of Pre-assessment/Post-assessment), it can be seen that 14 students improved their metaphor writing skills in accordance with the rubric (see Appendix E, Criteria No. 3) which was used to score both the pre-assessment and post-assessment. Of these 14 students, 6 were female and 8 were male. These students included the required number of effective metaphors to help in the description of their narrative essays. The two students who were most improved were number 20 and 24, who both increased their metaphor writing score from a 0 to a full score of 10. This is a huge gain for these students who within their pre-assessments were unable to include any metaphors whatsoever and at the end of the thematic unit were able to not only incorporate metaphors but do so effectively to add visual description to their writing. There are always subjects unable to gain or lose anything from the thematic unit implemented and just plateau at their original score. In this case study, I had 4 students remain the same within their metaphor writing score that being 4 male students. In addition, there were two males who rather than improve lost a few points within their metaphor writing score from pre-assessment to post-assessment.

Pre-assessment/Post- Assessment Metaphors within Essays

Table 1: Comparing Metaphors from Pre-assessment and Post-assessment

Assigned #	Pre-assessment "Metaphors"	Post-assessment Metaphors
5	Simile: • To me, that rice just taste dry and like dirt • Eating burnt popcorn is like eating burnt charcoal	Hyperbole: • My taste buds soared and probably reached a new galaxy.
7	Metaphor: • My fridge was a bloody hell	Simile: • My hands were shaking like an

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		earthquake
	Simile: • I ran as fast as the wind • I slide as a snail • As quiet as a thief • Looked as a hawk • Mopping the floors like Cinderella • I flee as the devil runs from the cross	Metaphor: • My arm was sand • The smell was heaven • The texture was silk • But the taste was gold • Their smiles were skyscrapers • Sea of people
17	• That morning was pitch black and the sky had chunks of clay surrounding it	• My stomach was a desert without an oasis in miles • My mind became an eclipse • My thoughts were a river • I was a beast that night • I was a log at bed that night • My eyes were stars in the night sky
18	Metaphor: • Turned on the fire-breathing dragon (stove) and started doing magic (cooking) • I was slaying this mighty beast (food) • The beast (stomach) was fighting back (rumbling/extremely hungry)	• Our impulsive storages were telling us to eat • We started taking baby steps by ordering some pleasing gas, just to make sure that the engine noticed that there was more coming. • I grabbed my shovel and started to dig and I ate it. • He orders a big mountain of chocolate cake and a big planet of ice cream with a chocolate river.
21	• I was basically eating an unknown alien glob • As time progressed you see people shoving the garbage into their mouths • Something that made you feel worse than a patient that has suffered from radiation poison	• Japan is the black sheep of the world when it comes to food • 5 was basically a volcano erupting in your mouth • My mouth basically turned in to Niagara Falls • The pink of the ice cream sparkled more than a clear crystal glass • My stomach was fuller than an AP high school student's backpack

Some of the metaphor examples from the pre-assessments and post-assessments were

included in the table above to analyze and discuss them. These examples from the student's

assessments have been included to better understand the students starting point in contrast to what they were able to create after the thematic unit was implemented.

As you recall, the pre-assessment (see Appendix C) was given to the students to find out what knowledge they had of writing narratives and metaphors. For the majority of the students including metaphors within their pre-assessments proved to be a difficult task. Many of the students were confused between metaphors and other types of figurative language, such as hyperboles, personification and the most used similes. Based on Table 1, we see how participant #7 included six examples of similes and underlined them within their pre-assessment as though they were metaphors. All of the examples include "like" or "as" within the comparison: "I slide as a snail, Looked as a hawk, Mopping the floors like Cinderella, I flee as the devil runs from the cross…"

In addition, we can see student #5 who included 2 similes within their writing and thought they were metaphors. This is something that happens often and is normally why teachers teach similes and metaphors simultaneously, so that students can see a side-by-side comparison of both types of figurative language.

There were students like #21 who knew what metaphors are but did not understand how to include them in their writing to add visual depictions. Students were required to include 6-10 metaphors within their assessments, but this student was only able to include 3. Student #17 also struggled to effectively use metaphors within their essay, but they did include one within his pre-assessment. Although their metaphors were coherent and well written they needed to include more of them in order to receive full marks for their metaphor score.

The post-assessment (see Appendix D) was administered after the thematic unit was implemented and it was a prompt similar to that of the pre-assessment. The students were

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expected to complete the same requirements asked of them within the pre-assessment, they just had a different topic within food to focus on.

There were students like #17 and #21 who were able to improve their skills of writing effective metaphors and incorporating them within their assessments. These two participants included 8 and 5 effective metaphors in their post-assessments. Some of the metaphors that #17 included were: "my stomach was a desert without an oasis in miles, my mind became an eclipse, my thoughts were a river, the hurricane of thoughts calmed down, my mind was a hot air balloon contemplating a city from above, I was a beast that night, I was a log at bed that night, and my eyes were stars in the night sky." We can see within these examples that participant #17 was trying to emphasize the fact that he was hungry and there was no food near him, which affected his mindset and put him in a state of hysteria until he finally got to eat. In addition, I enjoyed #17's metaphor, "my mind became an eclipse" so much that I decided to include it within the title of my thesis.

Moreover, student #21, included 5 metaphors: "Japan is the black sheep of the world when it comes to food, 5 was basically a volcano erupting in your mouth, my mouth basically turned in to Niagara Falls, the pink of the ice cream sparkled more than a clear crystal glass, and my stomach was fuller than an AP high school student's backpack." This participant included some of my favorite metaphors within the essays I read, his creativity and use of common knowledge comparisons were a breath of fresh air. Some of my favorites would have to include: "my stomach was fuller than an AP [advanced placement] high school student's backpack, Japan is the black sheep of the world when it comes to food, and the pink of the ice cream sparkled more than a clear crystal glass." I especially enjoyed the metaphor: "my stomach was fuller than an AP high school student's backpack," because the reader can quickly understand that the AP

high school student's backpack is overflowing with books and paperwork like the persons stomach which is over capacity with food. We also can see that participant #18 although he effectively included 3 metaphors, he did not meet the minimum of 6 metaphors, but he did improve from his pre-assessment where he was only capable of including one metaphor. The metaphors that he included in his post-assessment were: "our impulsive storages were telling us to eat, we started taking baby steps by ordering some pleasing gas, just to make sure that the engine noticed that there was more coming, he orders a big mountain of chocolate cake and a big planet of ice cream with a chocolate [sauce] river, I grabbed my shovel and started to dig and I ate it." Within the metaphors included, two stood out the most to me: "our impulsive storages were telling us to eat," and "We started taking baby steps by ordering some pleasing gas, just to make sure that the engine noticed that there was more coming." These metaphors depict their stomachs as storage, appetizers as pleasing gas and their stomachs as engines. Within the context of the essay they are easy to understand and flow with the narrative.

There are always those students that for X or Y reason just do not improve from pre-assessment to post-assessment, they either plateau or do a little worse than when they took the pre-assessment. Although student #7 included their 6 metaphors they also included a 7th metaphor that was actually a simile, "my hands were shaking like an earthquake." The student clearly compares his trembling hand to an earthquake by specifically using the word "like," making it a simile. While this was only 1 of the 7 "metaphors" they included, they may need a little clarification between similes and metaphors. Participant #5 included 1 simile within their pre-assessment and 1 hyperbole within their post-assessment, they completely missed the mark on metaphors.

Between pre-assessment and post-assessment metaphors we can see a mixture of outcomes. Within the study there were students who had a foundation of metaphors and needed improvement within their inclusion of figurative language in narratives to students who completely did not recall what metaphors are. The same applied for their post-assessments the students who had a foundation improved their inclusion of figurative language within their writing, several students who struggled with metaphors improved and some plateaued and saw no improvement.

Post-assessment Data Analysis

Graph 4: Post-Assessment Essay Data

Number of Students

■ 0-59 F   ■ 60-69 D   ■ 70-79 C   ■ 80-89 B   ■ 90-100 A
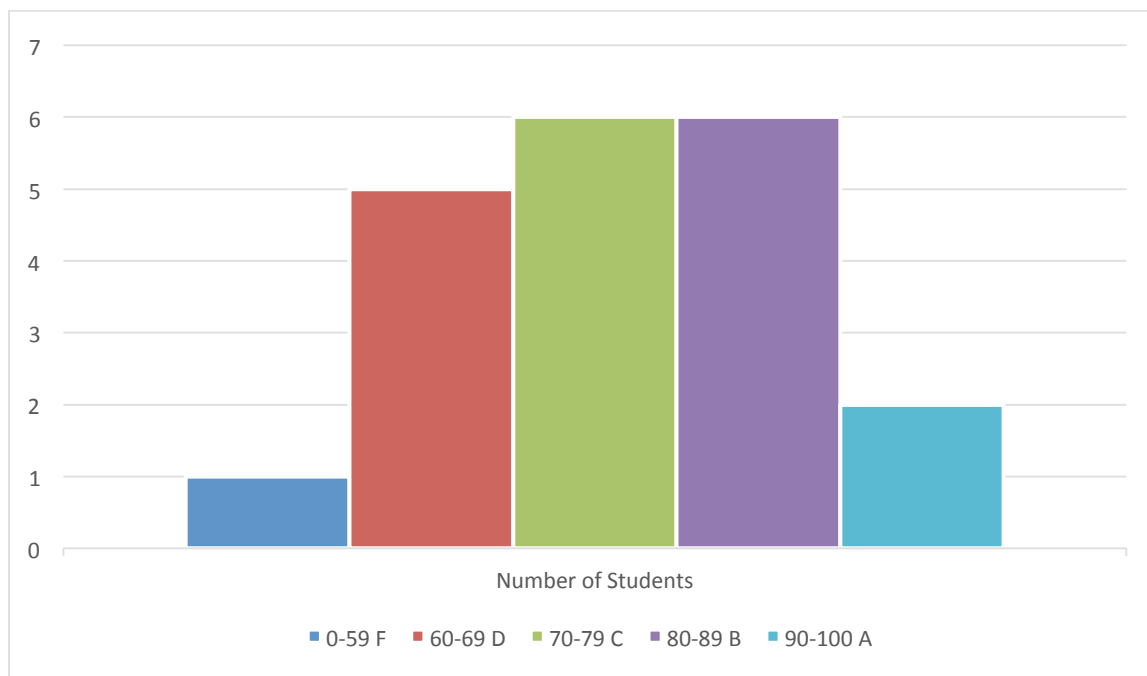
After analyzing the pre-assessments and deciding what my course of action would be with the Thematic Unit I was going to create to help my students acquire narrative and metaphor writing skills, I administered the post-assessment. Within Graph 4 (see graph above) you can see the range in outcomes from the students. The lowest post-assessment score being a 53%, which

in letter grades is an F. Although, this grade is the lowest it is still a big improvement from the lowest grade of the pre-assessment which was a 35% and actually belonged to the same student. Therefore, even the lowest scoring student from the pre-assessment had a gain of 18% and a 15-point gain in his point score, coming from a 28/80 to a 43/80. In addition to this improvement, the average score increased from a 61.3% to a 76.5%. Making an increase of 15.2% in the average percentage achieved by students and going up to a C in letter grades. The two students with the highest score on the post-assessment scored a 90% on their essay, which in letter grades is an A. The students who scored the highest on the post-assessment are #7 and #15. Number 7 is a female and she increased her score by 11% and number 15 is a male who increased his score from a 70% to a 90% a full 20% increase from pre-assessment to post-assessment. The percentage most often scored throughout the post-assessment was an 87% which was a 70/80 points.

These scores prove that there is a variety of improvement in narrative and metaphor writing within the students' data collected. Most importantly, the scores in the above graph prove the majority of the students within my study were able to improve their skills on how to write narratives and/or use metaphors effectively within their writing.

What this means for my narrative and metaphor unit (see Appendix F) is that I was able to build on the knowledge the students had, we had gains throughout all of the scores. I believe that starting from the basics of narrative writing and metaphors was a good course of action that helped with the percentage and knowledge gains. Therefore, students effectively worked up to the objectives expected of them.

Open-ended Questionnaire Data Analysis

The open-ended questionnaires (see Appendix G) were used to acquire feedback from the students on their experience of the unit, whether they found it helped improve their incorporation of metaphors in their narrative writing and any suggestions they may have for improving the unit. The purpose of getting the students input was because they are the best source of information on whether or not the unit was effective, whether it supported their needs and what could have been altered in order to meet their narrative and metaphor skills.

    1.   **What did you enjoy from the narrative unit?**

This question was included to find out what the students truly enjoyed from their experience throughout the narrative and metaphor unit. Students' opinions are important because the students are the center of the research, their knowledge or lack thereof after the unit implemented is what is being analyzed. Therefore, their feedback on the unit is crucial to this research.

   Subject #4 stated, "what I enjoyed the most was being able to relive the moments and memories by writing them down." Seven of the students who answered this question responded by saying they enjoyed reliving and reminiscing about events from their life. Memoirs are a type of literature that allows the writer to focus in on an event or events in their life. Allowing students to write about familiar occurrences permits them to use what they know as a basis and add from they are learning to what they already know. "I liked the integration of the academic and funny moments in the short story of the bad meal," stated Subject #16. Students enjoyed this type of writing because of their comfort level, reminiscing about events from their life is easy and comforting. This helps establish that when students are allowed to write about personal experiences, they find assignments more enjoyable.

Another commonality throughout the answers to this question was that three students appreciated the readings that were touched upon in this unit. "I enjoyed reading the selections in class and looking for figurative language and literary devices as a group," stated Subject #3. Not only did this student enjoy the reading selections but they also enjoyed our class discussions as well. Both *How to Eat a Guava* and *Hansel and Gretel* were mentioned throughout their answers. Subject #18 stated, "I [enjoyed] the dynamics that we did to learn a better way of the narrative and the readings that we used." In my experience as an educator, it is important that students enjoy what they are reading as they retain the information from the readings more so than they would a story that does not necessarily entertain or interest them.

2. What did you dislike from the narrative unit?

As previously mentioned, the opinion and experiences of students are very important to this research as it focuses on their learning and understanding of narratives and metaphors after the implementation of a unit. Therefore, I felt that it was necessary to understand what the students did not enjoy or what did not work for them throughout the unit. Their responses are varied and quite ironically some of them completely oppose one another. What works for one student does not necessarily work for all students and that is a universal truth most are aware of.

Ironically, what two students mentioned they did not enjoy was the limitation of the food experience prompt included on the pre and post-assessment (See Appendix C and Appendix D.) Student #3 detailed "I disliked that it was limited to writings about food." Another student responded simply with "Food literature." This is ironic because three students mentioned in question #1 they enjoyed the readings whereas these students did not enjoy them at all. They also mentioned that including a more general topic would have been more effective because they would have more memories to cipher through and choose from.

Two students also mentioned that they did not appreciate the unnecessary details included in the readings that just served to add to the length of the reading rather than to its understanding. "What I dislike most about narrative is that sometimes there can be too much unnecessary information that doesn't really help the story and makes it longer," affirmed student #4.

3. **What activity helped you the most in learning how to incorporate metaphors in your writing?**

The activities included within the narrative unit were utilized in order to teach the students the characteristics and attributes of narrative and metaphor writing. Therefore, understanding what activities and/or assignments best supported their needs was imperative to this research.

Eleven of the seventeen students who participated in the questionnaire part of the study concurred that having the opportunity to actually write a narrative in class was beneficial to their learning. "Writing stories in which the most dominant figurative speech is the metaphor is also a good way in which I could practice," stated #10. Practice makes perfect and the majority of the students who participated in the questionnaire made that clear. Student #16 indicated, "The narrative essay helped me most in how incorporate metaphors in the writing. Always it made me difficult to incorporate literary figures and comparisons as metaphors in writing."

Also, identifying the characteristics of narratives proved to be very helpful for two students because they were able to understand what they would have to include more or less in their own narrative. In addition to practicing the skills in class, two students found that our class discussions were helpful in understanding the material. "What really help me to learn better and understand metaphors was the discussion in class," identified student #2. We not only went over

the Power Points collectively but we also discussed and analyzed the classwork answers as a group to help them understand why they were right or wrong.

4. **How does using metaphors help you convey a vivid depiction in your narrative writing? What kind of impact does the use of metaphors have on your narrative writing?**

The answers to this question were the most descriptive of all the questions which therefore, created several commonalities throughout the answers compiled from the students. The reason I included this question, was so that we could see how students perceive the use of metaphors in their writing. What is its purpose? How does it change our writing?

The answer that repeatedly showed up from nine students was that metaphors help to provide a better description and eight students mentioned they give a deeper meaning to the narrative. "It gives a deeper meaning to what we want to express in our writing. The impact that metaphors have in narrative writing is that by making an indirect comparison we can make our writing have a bigger meaning," wrote student #2. This answer was one of my favorites because the student understands and recognizes that metaphors enhance our writing and they allow the readers to better understand what the author is describing or writing about. Subject #4 recognized, "Using metaphors can help give more humor to the narrative as well as give us something to better understand the concept and even help us give meaning to our surroundings. The impact depends on how much the person reading it understands the metaphor and in what direction he or she takes it." This answer proves that the students understood the fact that literary devices are at times ambiguous, what one reader understands might be different from what another reader does. It all depends on their experiences and the way they analyze the written

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piece; it also justifies that although an author might mean something specific by what he/she has written, it does not mean that their audience will take it as they would like them to.

Nine of the seventeen students who participated in the questionnaire recognized that metaphors improve the description in their writing. Subject #8 indicated, "When I write I have more options to describe things that sometimes cannot even be described. Also, they let the imagination flow more." This student realized that through metaphors they were able to describe things that would normally be difficult to describe, but by utilizing metaphors they were able to get their point across. "It helps me give a more specific and detailed description of something and it enhance the meaning," concurred student #9. Metaphors allow readers to get a better idea of what is being described or better understand the information being put forth.

In addition to these gems, six students stated that they also depict a visual representation for the readers. Moreover, some students even believe that metaphors help to make narratives more interesting (six students,) humorous (5 students) and bring a sophisticated (5 students) feel to narrative writing.

5. What do you think would improve this narrative unit?

Throughout the answers received from the students, the pattern of answers from 3 students were clear that more readings should be included in the unit. Three students also believe there should be an emphasis on poetry because they normally include more metaphors and figurative language narratives do. Student #19 indicated, "Reading more from modern writers and writing more narratives." As seen in previous answers as well, some students did not enjoy the food literature aspect of the unit. They would have preferred varied themes throughout the unit. "I think that more poems to analyze and short stories to write," added student #9. Students

agree that by reading and identifying metaphors used within the context they need to utilize them they are able to better understand how to incorporate them in their own writing.

Although we had several class discussions, three students believe that more class discussions would improve the unit and two believe that including a different theme for writing could benefit the unit as well. "I believe this unit could improve if we could have a little more time in class to discuss and expand our knowledge in narrative writing and using metaphors," stated subject #24. Discussions are always a great way to informally assess whether or not students are grasping the concepts, but it is also important to include individual work, to get a better understanding of who is struggling with the concepts being discussed and who is ready to continue building on the concepts being taught.

These responses were based on student opinions and could have been affected by class absences and full participation within the classes. For the most part several students agreed in different aspects whether it was reading more poems or having more discussions. I found it interesting that there were so many students that realized that metaphors give deeper meaning to our writing. The responses to the open-ended questionnaires are important to the conclusions of this study because they dive into what the students thought of the thematic unit.

Chapter VI: Conclusions

The purpose of this research project was to investigate and develop a unit that incorporates metaphors within narrative writing. This study could possibly help grade school English teachers, professors, and those individuals involved in English education, as well as individuals interested in writing or reading narratives as a form of developing students' literacy skills. The case study findings from the pre-assessment helped develop a thematic unit of resources aimed at improving the skills needed to create and utilize metaphor in narratives.

Summary of Findings

This study examined the following questions:

1. What happens when teachers incorporate metaphors when teaching writing at the college level?

2. How can we incorporate the use of metaphors in a writing class at the college level?

3. What are the pedagogical implications of teaching metaphors?

This section summarizes the main findings for each one of the three research questions.

Answering Research Questions

Research Question #1: What happens when teachers incorporate metaphors when teaching writing at the college level?

The data compiled from the post-assessments proves that when teachers incorporate metaphors in the teaching of narrative writing students are able to improve their writing. Once I began the unit students realized the importance of metaphors in writing, especially because it provides a vivid depiction of what the writer wants the audience to visualize as they are reading. The students' scores improved overall on the post-assessment essays. Also, when we focus in on

the specific scores for narrative writing and metaphor inclusion within their post-assessment, we can see a big increase in the proper utilization of the skills taught in class. The essays had more structure to them in the post-assessment and included more non-literal language to help enhance the descriptions of the events within them. Whereas, throughout the pre-assessment students wrote and had no organization to their ideas or well-developed descriptions. Therefore, we are able to deduce that the inclusion of metaphors in the narrative writing at university level is beneficial to the students because they are able to better express themselves and organize their ideas clearly.

Research Question #2: How can we incorporate the use of metaphors in a writing class at the college level?

The way that I incorporated the metaphors in the writing class was by starting at basics and working up to the desired outcome. I built a foundation with the narrative attributes PowerPoint and verified the students' comprehension throughout each step of the way, because I wanted to make sure they were understanding the skills at hand. Once I knew they understood the narrative attributes, I went over the elements of a story and had the students identify these elements within a short story. It is important to go over these two skills before incorporating the metaphor aspect to it, because the students first need to understand how to organize their ideas and then focus on including metaphors to help in their descriptions. In addition, I believe it is important to keep things simple; when you begin to over explain the students lose interest and get lost.

Research Question #3: What are the pedagogical implications of teaching metaphors?

The pedagogical implications of teaching metaphors is that it enhanced students' ability to use non-literal language in narrative writing. I believe that of the 20 students included in the study, the majority improved their metaphor writing skills and how to effectively include them in their narratives. When teaching metaphors in the classroom it allows students to improve the description within their writing. Students allow their readers to visualize a scene in their writing from their own perspective, because of the visual representation metaphors add to their writing that other non-literal language or descriptions do not. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the pedagogical implications of teaching metaphors could help teachers from all grade levels and from either English and Spanish classes. What I learned through my master's degree program is that as teachers we must adopt and adapt what we learn from our colleagues to fit our specific students.

Limitations of the Study

As with any study or research project there are limitations, this particular case study encountered a few limitations. One of the limitations encountered was the time constraint; because of it, only one high school grade level was able to be actively involved in the data collection process.

Another limitation encountered by the researcher is that only the data collected was limited to one class of students. In addition, from the class of 25 only 20 students submitted their consent forms. Also, three of those 20 students did not answer the open-ended questionnaire provided at the end of the thematic unit. This limited the research because information from some students was unavailable and therefore could not be taken into consideration while creating

the thematic unit or while analyzing the open-ended questions. Moreover, the students who did answer the open-ended questions did not respond thoroughly, they included vague answers especially to questions one and two.

Suggestions for Further Research

Because of the limitations previously mentioned, I was only able to collect data on one set of students. For those looking to continue research in this field, they could consider collecting data from a larger group of students and even different grade levels, instead of limiting it to freshman university students.

Also, as suggested by the students within the open-ended questions a study could focus their research on the utilization of metaphors within poetry and the impact it has on the inclusion of them. Moreover, a study could even include a variety of literature pieces from different genres to help students realize that metaphors are universal and can be included throughout all literary genres.

In addition, future researchers could include interviews as opposed to open-ended questionnaires to collect feedback that could have been better explained in an interview rather than a questionnaire. I believe that students included vague answers for some of the questions, that could have been better explained verbally than in a written answer.

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Classroom Research Request Letter

Dr. Rosita L. Rivera

Full Professor

Director-English Department

University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

Dear Dr. Rivera,

     As a graduate student and teaching assistant I am interested in encouraging students to learn English. For my thesis, I decided to incorporate metaphors into one of the essay units to see what the results may be. Eventually, I hope my research will contribute to the improvement of my students' educational experience here at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez. In order to conduct my research, I will be teaching and recollecting data from my intermediate students. My data collection will compose of a pre-assessment essay, create and implement a thematic unit based on the pre-assessment scores, administer a post-assessment essay and have the students answer open-ended questionnaires on their experience of the unit. As a result, I am writing to request your permission to conduct this research with one of my INGL 3103 sections. The duration of this case study is expected to be 3-4 weeks during the first semester of the 2015-2016 academic year. All the information gathered will be held confidential and completely anonymous.

Thank you for your consideration,

Rosa Nydia Gonzalez

MAEE Candidate

Teaching Assistant

English Department

University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

Appendix B

Consent form

University of Puerto Rico

Mayagüez Campus

College of Arts and Sciences

Department of English

REQUEST FOR CONSENT

My name is Rosa Nydia Gonzalez and I am a student in the Masters program in English

education at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez. I am interested in investigating the

effects food metaphors have on students learning for my Master's thesis, Incorporating

Metaphors in the Writing Classroom.

I need you to answer an open-ended questionnaire with a total of five (5) questions, as well as

the pre-assessment and post-assessment administered and the additional assessments used

throughout the thematic unit implemented in the classroom for this study. I am inviting you to

become a part of the study. Your participation is completely voluntary, which means that you are

not forced to participate if you do not want to.

This research does not imply a risk beyond what is normal. If you choose to participate, the

possibility of being harmed is unlikely. This research does not account the University of Puerto

Rico, Mayaguez Campus responsible for any liability or any claim that may arise as a result of

the activities of the study and the information requested and provided. This study will last for

about a month.

You do not need to write your name on the questionnaire, you can use another name (pseudonym) but it is not necessary. I am going to gather all the information provided on your questionnaire along with all the other students' questionnaires, this is to make sure no one will be able to identify your answers. The information collected will be kept confidential.

You must decide if you want to participate or not. Also, if you decide you want to participate now and then change your mind, there is no problem. You are free to leave the study at any time without penalty.

My phone number is (787) 431-3433 and my email is rosa.gonzalez5@upr.edu. You can call me if you have any questions about this study or if you want to know the results of the study. You will be given a copy of this form for your files.

Thank you,

Rosa Nydia Gonzalez

___ Yes, I agree to participate by my own will.

___ No, I do not agree to participate by my own will.

Participant Signature: _____   Date: _____

Researcher Signature: _____   Date: _____

Appendix C

Pre-assessment for students

INGL 3104 Pre-assessment

Welcome to the research, Incorporating Metaphors in the Writing Classroom.

Please follow the instructions provided for each section.

I. Basic information:

 Age: _____　　　　Gender: _____　　　　Date: _____

II. Pre-assessment:

Instructions: Narrate a 500-700-word essay on a bad experience cooking or a bad memory you

have of food in your life. (for example: one meal you hated eating, failed trying a new recipe,

lunch food, food at someone's house, burnt your dinner, bad experience at a fast food, etc.) Use

6-10 metaphors to enhance your story, help the reader paint a picture in their minds; be sure to

<u>underline</u> your metaphors in order to find them easily. Also, your essay must be in MLA format.

_____

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Post-assessment for students

INGL 3104 Post-assessment

Welcome to the research, Incorporating Metaphors in the Writing Classroom. Please follow the instructions provided for each section.

I.   Basic information:

Age: _____   Gender: _____   Date: _____

II. Post-assessment:

Instructions: Narrate a 500-700-word essay on a good experience cooking or a good memory you have of food in your life. (for example: one meal you love(d) eating or making, success trying a new recipe, holiday cooking, best meal you have ever had or made, family traditions, etc.) Use 6-10 metaphors to enhance your story, help the reader paint a picture in their minds; be sure to underline your metaphors in order to find them easily. Also, your essay must be in MLA format.

_____

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Appendix E
Pre/Post-Assessment Rubric

Criteria	Exemplary (10-9)	Proficient (8-7)	Satisfactory (6-5)	Fair (4-3)	Not Acceptable (0)	Total
Content:						
1. The exposition paragraph sets up the story by introducing the event/conflict, characters, and setting.						
2. The story is developed using engaging dialogue, vivid description, complex reflection and multiple plots to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.						
3. Metaphors (6-10) are incorporated into the story in a coherent way to create vivid pictures of the events, setting and characters. Figurative language is used to enhance description.						
4. The events follow chronological order.						
5. The conclusion provides a reflection on the story or the resolution of the events.						
Grammar:						
6. Student coherently uses a wide range of vocabulary throughout the essay.						
7. Student's spelling and sentence structure are efficient.						
Structure:						

8. Correct use of <u>MLA format</u>. (Heading, header, 1" margins, DS, TNR, 12 pt., title etc.)						
Total						____/8 0

Adapted from Turnitin Common Core State Standards-aligned writing rubrics.

Comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

Exemplary (10-9): The student applies the criteria completely and accurately demonstrating a **high level** of **performance.**
Proficient (8-7): The student applies the criteria adequately demonstrating a **moderate level** of **performance.**
Satisfactory (6-5): The student applies the criteria reasonably demonstrating a **low level** of **performance.**
Fair (4-3): The student tries to apply the criteria demonstrating a **high level** of **difficulty**.
Not Acceptable (0): The student **does not apply** the **criteria.**

Outline of Thematic Unit

I. Introduction of Narratives

    A. Discuss narratives, general characteristics

    B. Provide examples of narratives

    C. Have students identify the characteristics of narratives in the readings

II. Structure of Writing Narratives

    A. Discuss the structure of narratives

    B. Provide examples of the normal narrative structures

    C. Have students identify the structural characteristics for homework

III. Introduce Metaphors

    A. Discuss metaphors, general characteristics

    B. Provide examples of metaphors

    C. Have students identify metaphors from other figurative language

IV. Identifying Metaphors

    A. Have students identify the metaphors found in the readings

    B. Have students analyze what the meaning of each metaphor is

V. Writing Metaphors

    A. Have students write their own metaphors

    B. Have students incorporate their metaphors into a written piece

VI. Incorporating Metaphors into Writing

    A. Have students practice using metaphors in their writing

Open-ended Questionnaire

INGL 3104 Open-ended questionnaire

Welcome to the research, Incorporating Metaphors in the Writing Classroom. Please follow the instructions provided for each section. Remember, your participation is voluntary, which means that you are not forced to participate if you do not want to, as stated on the Request of Consent Form. Thank you for taking your time to complete the questionnaire.

Basic information:

Age: _____   Gender: _____   Date: _____

Assigned #: _____

II. Questionnaire:

Instructions: For each of the following statements, please provide the best response according to your opinion.

1. What did you enjoy from the narrative unit?_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What did you dislike from the narrative unit? _____

_____

_____

_____

3. What activity helped you the most in learning how to incorporate metaphors in your writing?

_____

_____

_____

 4. How does using metaphors help you convey a vivid depiction in your narrative writing? What

kind of impact does the use of metaphors have on your narrative writing? _____

_____

_____

_____

5. What do you think would improve this narrative unit? _____

_____

_____

_____