Chapter 2

Values and Purposes in Digital Pedagogies: A Meta-Analysis on Finnish and Greek Teachers’ Metaphorical Thinking

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to use metaphor analysis in order to discuss and analyze the patterns resulting from Finnish and Greek language and science teachers’ (N= 8) interviews on how they integrate digital technologies into classroom practices. To this end, the author performs a meta-analysis of findings from two previous studies on teacher’s metaphorical thinking. This is done through the theoretical lens of two cognitive science related theories (conceptual metaphor and conceptual integration or blending theory) and a theory originating from philosophy of language (semantic theory of metaphor). To meet the ends of the study, the author examined the input sources that inform the teachers’ thinking in order to extract single-scope and double-scope networks of metaphors. In this way, we can see what values and purposes emerge out of the teachers’ choices when digital pedagogies are introduced into the classroom practice.

INTRODUCTION

Being in a process of continuous decision-making, teachers integrate digital environments into the classroom practice to cater for their students’ current needs. Pedagogical decisions are based on the teacher’s belief system and reflect the intuitive and the rational bases upon which the individual structures, justifies, and warrants a decision. The intuitive basis refers to the individual’s own experiences and may be founded on personal needs or tradition. The rational basis includes principles, research findings, scholarly contributions, and examined practices. It may quite easily be broadened into a more detailed structure in which there is interaction between the bases and where the reasons given consist of common elements from both. Justification and argumentation for pedagogical decisions is called the teachers’ pedagogical thinking (Tirri, 2011, Kynäslahti et al., 2006).

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Values and Purposes in Digital Pedagogies

Nowadays, technological advancement creates a need to integrate social media, connective and digital technologies into the classroom practices. In addition, based on such advancement, school curricula (e.g., the Finnish core curriculum) orient teaching toward a technologically-enhanced teaching practice. As socio-technical developments influence values and purposes, the pedagogical thinking changes. It is therefore important to understand what direction this change takes.

Pedagogical thinking is intertwined with the values and goals of the curriculum that determines teacher purposefulness. This means that teachers make sense of classroom practice in terms of values and purposes that shape their actions. It seems, then, that there are two primary domains at work in this meaning making process. According to conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), the source domain (i.e., values and purposes in this case) is more readily available, as it draws from the teachers’ already lived experience. The target domain (i.e., classroom practice) is what they are trying to understand in order to make sound pedagogical decisions. As it is an act of mapping aspects from one domain to another, teachers’ thinking is metaphorical and, as such, it generates metaphors.

An examination into teachers’ metaphors can play an important role in the effort to understand how the pedagogical thinking changes. Departing from the Aristotelian view of metaphor as ‘something that happens to the noun’, Ricoeur (1978, p. 15-17) extends the definition by applying the notion of movement (meaning stretch) to the item. This is a semantically-focused process inclusive of all meaningful linguistic entities, thus transcending the limits of the noun. This transcendence allows for metaphor to appear as encompassing multiple phenomena (Cameron, 2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Ritchie, 2010). In this sense, metaphors become a way to extract socio-cultural conventions teachers are tied with or reject. However, the complexity of the situation puts the two-domain view, the level of domain abstractness and the directionality of the transfer (i.e., from source to target) in question and call for theoretical orientations to complement our understanding of metaphor (Gibbs & Cameron, 2008; Fauconnier & Turner, 2008; Gill, 2010; Grady, 1997, 2005; Suchostawska, 2008).

Based on these, we used metaphor analysis in order to discuss and analyze the patterns arising from teachers’ accounts of how they integrate digital technologies into their practices. To this end, we performed a meta-analysis of findings from two previous studies on language and science Finnish and Greek teachers’ metaphors (Vivitsou et al., 2014, 2016). We did so through the theoretical lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999) and Conceptual Integration Theory (or Blending Theory) (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002). In addition, Ricoeur’s (1976, 1978) Semantic Theory of Metaphor was used.

In this way, we were able to identify the values and purposes underlying pedagogical choices in relation to underpinnings arising from the relevant literature.

METAPHORICAL THINKING IN DIGITAL PEDAGOGIES

Values and Pedagogical Purposes as Domains and Spaces

One lens to interpret the role of technology in pedagogy is through metaphor analysis. In their seminal work, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) found that pervasiveness of metaphor exceeds the domain of language and expands onto thought and action. This means that the concepts governing our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern the mundane details of everyday functioning: what we perceive, how we get around in the world, how we relate to other people. In this sense, not only does our
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