

Ignorance of Using Figurative Language in Written Communication

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Abstract

This paper aims at investigating the ignorance of using figurative language in written communication. The researcher adopted the descriptive analytical method using questionnaire to collect the data for this study. The sample of this study composed from 70 university teachers who responded to the questionnaire selected from different Sudanese universities and colleges due to their experience in teaching English. The data has been analyzed statistically using SPSS program. The results have shown that; EFL Students ignore using figurative language in their communication.

Keywords: figurative language, written communication, EFL students

1. Introduction

Using figures of speech in written communication have started to gain more interest across the world on different language research areas, what makes written communication better even with native speakers. To achieve such level of written communication will not be an easy task for the undergraduates, unless they find the support and encouragement from teachers and institutes, through using adequate methods to apply figurative language, and providing them with the materials containing such expressions. To have knowledge in grammatical structure and a huge vocabulary is not sufficient enough for speaking a language or communicating ideas, what makes the use of figurative language necessary in written communication.

Aims and Scope of the Study

This Paper aims to investigate the ignorance of using figurative language in written communication and the scope is limited to fourth year EFL students at Sudan University of Science and Technology, the academic year 2018-2019, the sample contain 70 university teachers.

2. Literature Review

The Concept of Figurative Language

"Figure of speech is any way of saying something other than the ordinary way" Perrine (1991). While, Rozakis (1995) states that "Figurative language is saying one thing in terms of another". It's clear that figurative language is an expression used by someone indirectly by using the comparison. It cannot give the intended idea if translated literally because the comparison in figurative language expression has the meaning. Generally, in figurative language, the intended meanings of the words, sentences and expressions used do not coincide with their literal meanings (Glucksberg, 2001). When speaking figuratively, speakers mean something other than what they literally say (Gibbs and Colston, 2012). Therefore, to understand figurative language, an individual must be able to grasp the speaker's intention in a given context (Rapp and Wild, 2011). Traditionally, figurative language has been regarded as deviant of so-called literal language. By contrast, it is now well established that figurative language is ubiquitous part of daily language and social communication. For instance, approximately 8% of adult utterances in conversations among friends contain some irony (Gibbs, 2000)

Figurative Competence

"Traditionally, the mastery of a language was practically synonymous with the knowledge of the grammar, lexis and phonetics of that language, in other words, with linguistic knowledge" (Richards & Schmidt 1993).

Based on (Hymes, 1964) studies, (Canale and Swain, 1980) developed and refined the notion of «communicative competence». In their 1980 canonical paper, communicative competence is understood as the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication.

The theoretical framework for communicative competence proposed by Canale and Swain includes four areas of knowledge and skill:

1. Linguistic competence (knowledge of grammar, lexis and phonetics)
2. Pragmatic competence:
 - 2.1. Sociolinguistic competence (socio-cultural norms, rules of appropriateness),
 - 2.2. Discourse competence (mechanisms used to form a unified discourse; cohesion and coherence) and
 - 2.3. Strategic competence (verbal and non-verbal strategies used to compensate for breakdowns in communication and to enhance the effectiveness of communication). Yet, no explicit mention is made to figurative competence (Low, 1988) as another fundamental sub-competence necessary for successful communication. A working awareness of figurative language, then, is a valuable tool for learners since it can facilitate comprehension, aid communicative interactions between native and non-native speakers extend vocabulary and help interpret and store new language items (Lazar, 2003). In other words, as Littlemore's (2001) points out, «metaphoric competence is important for foreign language learners, as it is likely to contribute to their overall language ability. »

Figurative Competence in Learners of EFL

It has been widely observed that, children acquire a second language with more ease than adults because their brains are more flexible and have a greater capacity to assimilate new data as well as to develop a more native-like accent (Bowerman & Levins, 2001).

In addition to biological factors, the fact that children are usually more motivated and disinhibited as compared to adult learners may certainly account for successful language acquisition at the early stages of life (Lightbown & Spada 2003).

Tolaas (1991), states that the innate ability children have to think metaphorically seems to stem from the embodied nature of figurative thought. In fact, children's experiences with their own bodies, the manipulation of objects and their relations with the world around them provide the basis for the construction of metaphorical thought. Basic concepts such as happiness or sadness, for example, are soon associated with upward and downward orientation respectively, for parents and caretakers who provide affection, food and comfort are spatially above the child, and when babies cry they tend to be lifted up and held in the adults' arms. In like manner, the walking experience of children also reinforces the correlation up-happiness and down sadness, for children experience success when standing upright and failure and even pain when falling.

3. Materials and Methods

The researcher has used the descriptive analytical, quantitative method. The population of this study is drawn exclusively from university students at Sudanese universities, the academic year 2018-2019.

The researcher chooses Sudanese university teachers of English from various universities who responded to a questionnaire.

Tools of the Study

The researcher uses a questionnaire which was given to 70 Sudanese English university teachers whom were selected randomly.

4. Results and Discussion

The researcher uses the questionnaire as a tool for collecting the data related to this paper. The researcher has designed the questionnaire to obtain teachers' views and attitudes toward Ignorance of Using Figurative Language in Written Communication

The Analysis of the Questionnaire

Statement no (1): The use of figurative expressions makes utterances stronger than literal ones.

Table (1) using figurative expressions

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	34	50.0
Agree	20	28.6
Uncertain	5	7.1
Disagree	7	10
Strongly disagree	3	4.3
Total	70	100

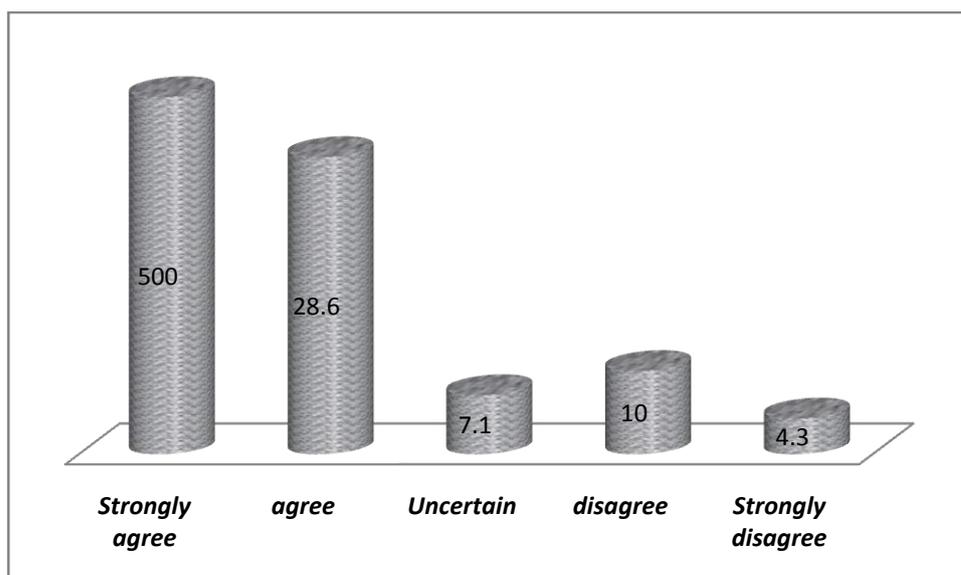


Figure (1) using figurative expressions

From the above table (1) and figure (1) It is clear that there are (35) persons in the study's sample with percentage (50.0%) strongly agreed with "The use of figurative expressions makes utterances stronger than literal ones." There are (20) persons with percentage (28.6%) agreed with that and (5) persons with percentage (7.1%) were not sure and (7) persons with percentage (10.0%) disagreed. and (3) persons with 3.4% are strongly disagreeing. This indicates that people aware of how much the use of figurative expressions is important and to what extent its ignorance can affect on their communication.

Statement no (2): Figurative language is not included in the syllabus being taught to EFL students.

Table (2) Figurative language in the syllabus

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	27	38.6
agree	32	45.7
Uncertain	7	10
disagree	3	4.3
Strongly disagree	1	1.4
Total	70	100

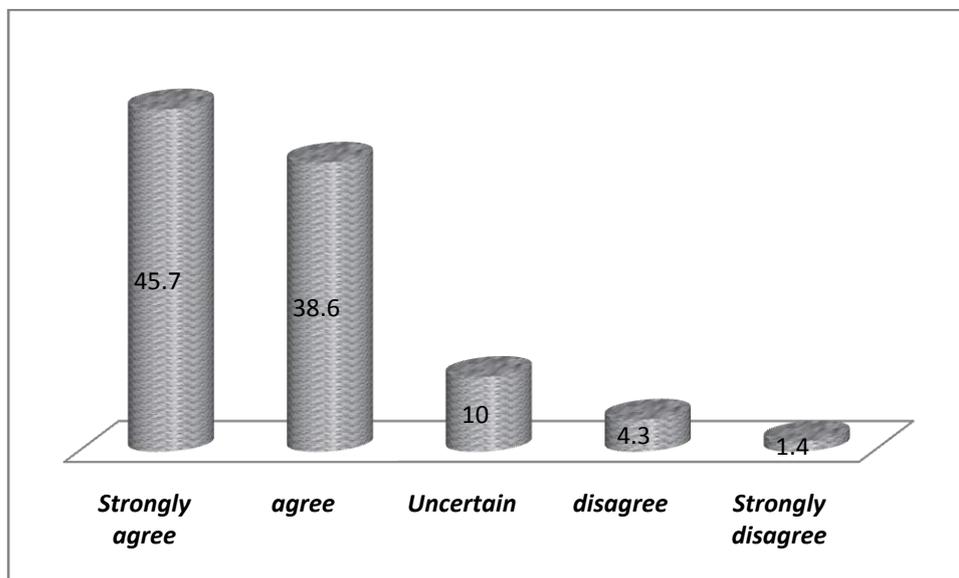


Figure (2) Figurative language in the syllabus

It is clear from the above table (2) and figure (2) that there are (32) persons in the study's sample with percentage (45.7%) strongly agreed with "Figurative language is included in the syllabuses being taught to EFL students." There are (27) persons with percentage (38.6%) agreed with that, and (7) persons with percentage (10.0%) were not sure, and (3) persons with percentage (3.4%) disagreed. and (1) persons with 1.4% are strongly disagree which show

that the main reason of ignorance of figurative language in communication is its ignorance in syllabus.

Statement no (3): EFL learners are not enthusiastic to use figurative expressions in their speech.

Table (3) enthusiasm in using figurative expressions

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	35	50
agree	30	42.9
Uncertain	0	0
disagree	2	2.9
Strongly disagree	3	4.2
Total	70	100

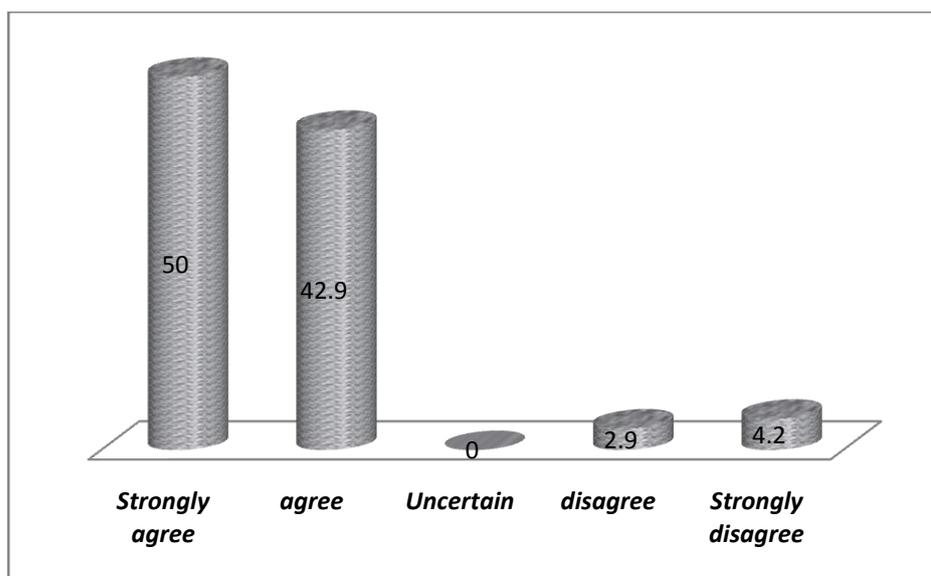


Figure (3) enthusiasm in using figurative expressions

It is clear from the above table (3) and figure (3) that there are (35) persons in the study's sample with percentage (50.0%) strongly agreed with "EFL students are very enthusiastic to use figurative expressions in their speech. ". There are (30) persons with percentage (42.9%) agreed with that, and (0) persons with percentage (00.0%) were not sure that, and (2) persons with percentage (2.9%) disagreed. and (3) persons with 4.2% are strongly disagreed, this strong support for the statement indicate that students do not interest in using figurative language for many reasons which have been discussed in the research.

Statement no (4): Figures of speech are unfamiliar to most of the students.

Table (4) Familiarity of the figurative expressions

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	28	40
agree	27	38.6
Uncertain	5	7.1
disagree	3	2.3
Strongly disagree	7	10
Total	70	100

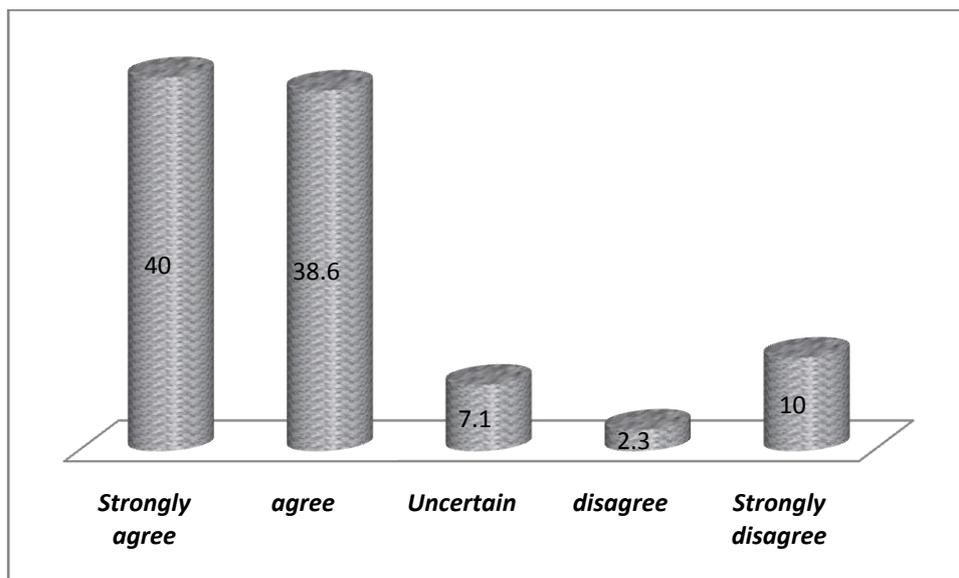


Figure (4) Familiarity of the figurative expressions

It is clear from the above table (4) and figure (4) that there are (28) persons in the study's sample with percentage (40.0%) strongly agreed with "Figures of speech are unfamiliar to most of the students." There are (27) persons with percentage (38.6%) agreed with that, and (5) persons with percentage (7.2%) were not sure that, and (3) persons with percentage (2.3%) disagreed. and (7) persons with 10.0% are strongly disagreed, which claim that students even they do not know what are figures of speech so they do not know how to use them.

Statement no (5): There is no mutual understanding for the figurative expressions produced by teachers and their students.

Table (5) understanding figurative expressions

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	40	57.1
agree	25	35.7
Uncertain	0	0
disagree	3	4.3

Strongly disagree	2	2.9
Total	70	100

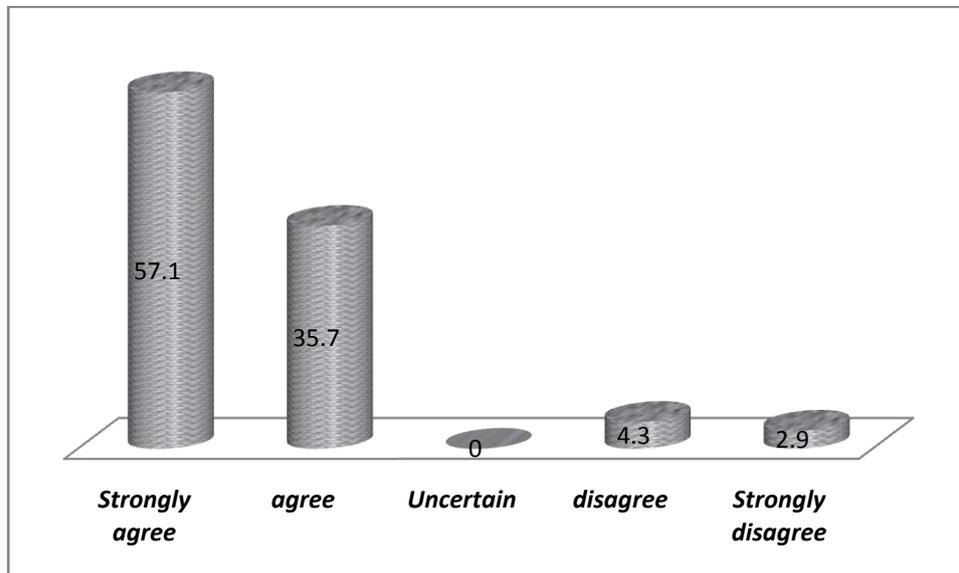


Figure (5) understanding figurative expressions

It is clear from the above table (5) and figure (5) that there are (40) persons in the study's sample with percentage (57.1%) strongly agreed with "There is no mutual understanding for the figurative expressions produced by teachers and their students." There are (25) persons with percentage (35.7%) agreed with that, and (0) persons with percentage (00.0%) were not sure that, and (3) persons with percentage (3.4%) disagreed. and (2) persons with 2.9% are strongly disagreed, which clearly showed that communication between teachers and their students do not go smoothly due to the misunderstanding and misuse of figurative expressions.

5. Report Discussion

The data collected and analyzed in relation to the hypothesis of the study. The data was collected via the questionnaire which has been given to Sudanese English university teachers from various Sudanese universities. After analyzing the data, the results have shown that; EFL students ignore using figurative language in their written communication.

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