

# **Metaphor comprehension in the EFL classroom**

*An investigation of metaphor comprehension in the EFL  
classroom based on the textbook Targets for Vg1 students in  
the general education program*

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**Spring 2014**

# Abstract

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### *An investigation of metaphor comprehension in the EFL classroom based on the textbook Targets for Vg1 students in the general education program*

This master's thesis is aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. *Are metaphorical expressions more difficult to comprehend than ordinary lexical expressions?*
2. *To what extent are Norwegian EFL students able to understand metaphorical expressions in texts representative of the expected level of English in LK06 at Vg1?*
3. *Is there a distinction between majority and minority EFL students in their comprehension of metaphorical expressions?*

The basis for the study was the textbook *Targets*, used in the five-hour English course at Vg 1, the general education program. In order to find out to what extent the students were able to understand metaphorical expressions, 40 sentences from the textbook were tested on 57 students in two Vg1 classes. Three categories of expressions were tested; distracters (sentences containing ordinary lexical expressions), core 1 items (metaphorical expressions without a Norwegian equivalent) and core items 2 (metaphorical expressions with a Norwegian equivalent).

The findings indicate that metaphorical expressions in English pose a challenge to EFL learners. Metaphorical expressions seem more difficult to comprehend than ordinary lexical expressions. The students scored lower on both the core 1 items and the core 2 items than the distracters. Their overall score on metaphor comprehension of about 80% points to a lack of metaphoric competence. The expressions in the core items 2 group received the lowest score, both from majority and minority students. A distinction in comprehension between the majority students and the minority was also found. The minority students scored lower in all three categories. Most significant was the low score among the minority boys.

Based on these findings, metaphoric competence seems to be neglected in the EFL classroom, and does not seem to have the same position in language teaching and learning as other language competences emphasized to reach native-like English. More focus on metaphors teaching is needed. How to implement exciting and relevant teaching methods remains a challenge.

## Acknowledgements

Writing a master thesis has been a long, challenging, but most interesting journey. Writing a thesis working full time has forced me to search for my innermost qualities as an academic. I have, without a doubt, learned a lot, both professionally as well as mentally. Writing a thesis of this scale requires structure and will power. I appreciate everything that I have learned in this process.

It would not have been possible to finish this task without the help of people around me. First of all, I want to thank my supervisor, Bergljot Behrens. Without her detailed feedback and motivation, this would have been an impossible mission. Her knowledge on this topic has been most valuable, and she has constantly provided me with literature. I have always left her office feeling light at heart and ready to keep on working. We have had interesting discussions, not only concerning the thesis itself, but also concerning common experiences from both being teachers.

Moreover, I need to thank my family who has been very patient the last two years. They have realized how important this work has been for me. Right now, they are probably happy that the finish line is reached at last.

Furthermore, I need to thank my employer, Askim videregående, who has supported me since the beginning and has organized a suitable timetable in order to simplify my working days. They have granted me days off to write and have encouraged me to fulfill my dream. They have emphasized the importance of having teachers with a master's degree. Last, but not least, I am very grateful to the students who voluntarily took part in my research. Without them, there would not be a thesis on metaphor comprehension in the classroom.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Being able to read (and write) is like magic. Seeing all these letters dance before our eyes, forming into words, sentences and stories, creating pictures and movies in our heads. I have always had a genuine interest in literature and languages. Reading has been an important part of my life as long as I can remember. It is impossible to describe how reading sometimes makes you feel. In addition, being able to read in a foreign language widens the access to even more exciting literature, well written language, funny and exotic words and different and unknown cultures. I first started learning English in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, but from then on I ravenously sought opportunities to further my language development. Then, later on, the joy of learning German and French added the wish of having an academic career. All my language teachers throughout my adolescence have been extremely inspiring and important contributors to my love of foreign languages, as well as my mother's bookshelf and the local library where I live.

Beyond doubt, English is a highly treasured subject within the Norwegian school system. Norwegian students start learning English from their very first year at school, and many of them are quite skilled when it comes to English speaking abilities once they leave upper secondary school. Furthermore, we are surrounded by an enormous input of English every day, through music, media etc. Moreover, for many Norwegians, travelling around the world is a kind of a lifestyle and therefore being able to communicate in English is considered necessary and important.

However, many Norwegians never develop language abilities beyond the level of "tourist-English". As Lehmann (1999) points out, the level of Norwegians' spoken English does not always correspond to a similar level of an academic proficiency in written English. According to her this may be the result of 30 years of the communicative approach conducted in most Norwegian classrooms. In her research she has shown that Norwegian students display a low degree of academic English competence. Another reason for their low degree of academic English competence could be fossilization, assuming that students at some point become tired of English, thinking their English is sufficient for their needs and hence lose their motivation to improve. Students also tend to overestimate their skills and may not even be aware of their actual competence (Nacey 2010:41). These considerations clearly relate to my work as a foreign language teacher, in that I meet a number of challenges in my aims as a teacher to improve the language competence of my students.

How we work to achieve the different competence aims set in the curriculum has been of major interest to me. Do we actually focus on all the necessary competences when we teach English as a foreign language? Teaching and learning a foreign language in a classroom is a setting and a reality far away from learning a language in its natural surroundings within the borders of a foreign country. Norwegian students learning English at school do not have the possibility to practice their English in a natural environment communicating with native speakers and taking part in their everyday lives. How then, are we going to use the language we learn in a classroom when encountered in its natural surroundings? And how are we going to work to achieve native-like English? As Brown says “learning a language is a long and complex undertaking” (Brown 2004: 1). He also comments on the fact that to achieve fluency in a foreign language is almost impossible within the walls of a classroom. In an acquisition process several variables are involved (Brown 2004). Knowing how to speak a language is not always the key to successful communication. The importance of possessing several skills to achieve successful communication is portrayed both in The Council of Europe’s *The Common European Framework* and in the Norwegian syllabus LK 06 (Knowledge Promotion Reform). This includes skills like cultural competence, pragmatic competence, lexical competence and metaphoric competence.

Working as an EFL teacher in both lower and upper secondary schools for a number of years has given me several interesting issues to reflect upon, and also often to discuss with my fellow colleagues, especially issues concerning motivation, but also other language related challenges among students. These issues are founded in personal experiences in the classroom, which include an obvious lack of motivation for English among a number of students, discussions with the students’ opinion about the level and the content of the textbook, how to develop their language skills in general, and their often limited vocabulary which restricts the possibility of being fluent in an L2. Even before I started my master studies, I have been interested in conducting research focusing on some kind of learner related challenge in the classroom, something that was related to my work and something that might improve my teaching and/or pinpoint certain areas where English teaching has failed or might need a slight change or improvement. Vocabulary in textbooks has been an area of great interest since I started teaching foreign languages (English, French and German) in upper secondary almost 4 years ago. I quickly realized that for many students the vocabulary in the textbooks posed a challenge. I very much agree with the statement that “academic

achievement rests largely on vocabulary knowledge” (Oxford 2011:254). A rich and varied vocabulary will facilitate language learning and processing.

In the spring of 2011, I conducted a small investigation on teachers’ experience relating to a potential mismatch between the students’ proficiency level in Vg1 and the textbook being used. One of my research questions was

- *Do teachers experience a mismatch between students’ proficiency level and the textbook?*

Interviews with some English teachers revealed that they did experience a mismatch between students’ proficiency level and the textbook. The result of this investigation along with comments on the textbook from my own students, created a growing interest to investigate this topic further as a part of my master’s thesis.

In order to satisfy the goals dictated in the syllabus, most teachers rely quite heavily upon the textbooks in their teaching. Usually, the annual plan we develop for the subject of English studies (or any other subject) is based on a textbook and the topics it contains. We trust textbook writers to include the topics and tasks that aim at the goals set in the syllabus (LK06). In the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), it is stated that “textbook writers are obliged to make concrete, detailed decisions on the selection and ordering of texts, activities, vocabulary and grammar to be presented to the learner” (CEFR: 141). These writers are expected to give teachers and pupils thorough instructions and relevant activities and exercises linked to the material they offer. The teaching and learning processes are greatly influenced by these products. The writers not only of textbook materials, but also testing materials, are “obliged to choose which words to include” (CEFR: 151). Consequently, which book to choose for a given EFL course is not something to be handled too leniently.

When working with text comprehension and vocabulary in the classroom, I have experienced that metaphorical expressions often are the most difficult ones for students to understand. For many students, this lack of understanding often leads to a perception that the language in the textbook is rather difficult. I have also had a notion of differences in metaphor comprehension in EFL learning between students with Norwegian as their mother tongue (referred to as majority students) and students with Norwegian as their second language (referred to as minority students). The minority students seem to struggle more in comprehending



metaphorical expressions. Moreover, a general absence of metaphorical expressions in students' compositions, as well as comments about the textbook being rather difficult have motivated the present study of metaphor comprehension. The empirical basis for the study is the textbook *Targets*, used at Vg 1, general studies.

The present research was also motivated by theory on metaphors and metaphoric competence I came across during the investigation of a potential mismatch between the level of the textbook and the students' proficiency level in 2011. Anne Golden's (2005) study on metaphor comprehension was inspiring as well. Many researchers emphasize the importance of metaphoric competence in foreign language teaching and learning in order to increase the students' communicative competence, and hence strive for native-like language abilities (Radić-Bojanić, Nacey 2010, Holme 2004). As metaphorical expressions seem to pose difficulties, the students may have been exposed to some kind of elusion of metaphors in classroom teaching. Metaphors do not have the same status as other lexical expressions when working with vocabulary (cf 1.3.1). In addition, there are thousands of different metaphorical expressions, so the question is how to work systematically with them in foreign language learning. Rikke Pihlstrøm (2013) supports this notion. According to her, collocations (including metaphors) do not seem to be a crucial part of Norwegian textbooks. This seems to be the case even though collocating words is considered an effective way of expanding students' vocabulary and improving their language acquisition (especially in lower and upper secondary school). Anne Golden (2005) also stresses the importance of conducting "studies of figurative language in textbooks as well as of students' mastery of this type of language" (Low 2010:36).

To sum up, to further support my choice of investigating metaphors in EFL learning and whether or not metaphorical expressions might complicate language acquisition in general, I will briefly refer to research on metaphorical comprehension. Metaphorical expressions, just like words, are of different types. They appear in different contexts, they have different forms and meanings, and some are more common than others (Golden 2005). However, there is "an overall tendency for L2 students to lag behind their L1 peers in using some metaphorical types" (MacArthur 2012:135). Golden (2005), after her studies on students' metaphor comprehension in Norwegian textbooks, also claims that L2 students find metaphorical expressions difficult, both in terms of appropriate use and comprehension. Research (Pihlstrøm 2013, Cooper 1999, Cardoso and Vieira 2006) shows that, in general, L2 students find certain types of metaphorical expressions difficult to comprehend. In addition, some

types of metaphorical expressions are more difficult than others (MacArthur 2012). Lowery (2013), an experienced EFL teacher, also shares her perception that how to master figurative language is actually one of her students' most difficult areas. Not only do they find it difficult to comprehend figurative language, they struggle even more to use it appropriately. Since we, as EFL learners, do not have a lifetime of exposure to English language and culture, we are not in the same position as native speakers of English to understand certain idioms and other types of figurative speech found in the English language and culture (Lowery 2013:12).

Literary texts, for example, may often be subjective and difficult to comprehend due to the large number of metaphorical expressions (Cardoso and Vieira 2006:1). I argue that there is an obvious need to widen the research on L2 students' understanding of metaphors. I will also investigate if Golden's (2005) claim that students struggle in comprehending metaphorical expressions holds for English as well.

I have chosen to investigate the language in the textbook that we use at our school and which represents the level of the five-hour English course on Vg1 general education program. Some students perceive the level of this textbook as difficult. Aspects such as vocabulary, topics, how the texts are presented, linguistic complexity, text types, length of the texts, and discourse structure are crucial to students' perception of a textbook, and also the textbook's relevance for the learner(s) is an important contribution to the students' perception of a textbook (CEFR 2001). In addition, based on the English subject curriculum in LK06, students in Vg1 are expected to have reached a certain competence level of English, a competence level which textbook writers base their choice of texts and language on. This expected level of competence is not always comparable to the students' actual competence. In other words, they have not reached the aims in LK06. In addition, my belief that many students show a lack of metaphoric competence has led to the following research questions:

4. *Are metaphorical expressions more difficult to comprehend than ordinary lexical expressions?*
5. *To what extent are Norwegian EFL students able to understand metaphorical expressions in texts representative of the expected level of English in LK06 at Vg1?*
6. *Is there a distinction between majority and minority EFL students in their comprehension of metaphorical expressions?*

## **1.1 Structure of the thesis**

My thesis is organized in six chapters, which include theory, methodology, and the analysis and discussion of my investigation. First, in chapter 1, the reasons for my choice of topic in this thesis are stated. Moreover, the research questions are presented, as well as vocabulary in LK06, the textbook on which the investigation is based and previous studies on metaphoric competence. In chapter 2, theory on metaphors is presented and linked to L2 teaching and learning. This includes metaphor processing. Chapter 3 comprises the methodology. The findings are presented and analyzed in chapter 4. They are then further discussed in chapter 5. Finally, the conclusion is found in chapter 6.

## **1.2 Vocabulary in LK06**

Textbooks used in English in upper secondary school often contain lists of competence aims from LK06 in their introductions, or at the beginning of each chapter. In *Targets* each chapter starts with a front page containing the theme of the chapter and some main aims from LK06. However, the aims listed there are not as detailed as the competence aims after year 2, 4, 10 and Vg1 and 2 in LK06. In order to link the theme of my thesis to what is stated in the English subject curriculum some of the aims will be described in more detail in the present chapter.

The Norwegian curriculum LK06 is founded on the guidelines in CEFR (2010). These guidelines cover an immense field of language teaching and learning, including the importance of lexical competence in fields such as vocabulary range, idiomatic expressions, frozen metaphors, phrasal idioms and colloquialisms (CEFR 2010).

In LK06, the English version, a general description of the main objectives of the subject constitutes the introduction. Furthermore, it has been structured into three main subject areas; language learning, communication, and finally culture, society and literature. These main subject areas also include separate competence aims, including four basic skills:

- being able to express oneself in writing and orally
- being able to read English
- numeracy
- being able to use digital tools in English

Within the three main subject areas mentioned above, there are specific competence aims after year 2, year 4, year 7, year 10 and after Vg1 (programs for general studies) and Vg2 (vocational education programs).

Given the special status that metaphors have among many researchers and linguists (cf. chapter 2.0), it is surprising that metaphors are not explicitly mentioned in the English subject curriculum. However, through the objectives of the subject and the specific competence aims in the English subject curriculum in LK06 teachers are told to work on language teaching in such a way that learning and understanding metaphors are attended to. For instance, when working to achieve communicative competence; “to succeed in a world where English is used for international interpersonal communication, it is necessary to master the English language. Thus we need to develop our vocabulary and our skills in using the systems of the English language” (Eng sub curriculum 2010:). In other words, to master the English language (or any language) we also need to be able to understand metaphorical ways of expression. Hence, metaphors are implicitly attended to in LK06.

Some metaphors are culturally restricted, and to avoid misconceptions when communicating, metaphors are even more important to master. “When using the language in communication, we must be able to take cultural norms and conventions into consideration” (Eng sub curriculum 2010:1). In addition to listing other obvious language skills, LK06 points to vocabulary and idiomaticity: “Good communication requires knowledge and skills in using vocabulary and idiomatic structures (...) and syntax of sentences and texts” (Eng sub curriculum 2010:2). The term *idiomatic structures* is a term also to be used on some types of metaphors, and this aim is probably the most obvious aim in the English subject curriculum in Norway related to learning metaphors.

Being able to find and understand literary devices, metaphors being among the most important ones, is an essential part of any type of language learning. According to LK06, English literature, from nursery rhymes to Shakespeare’s sonnets, is a fundamental part of the subject. More importantly, it provides the subject itself with the foundation needed to learn the language. Since metaphors are naturally embedded in literature, students would need to know how to interpret them, both in English, Norwegian and other foreign languages like French, German and Spanish. Moreover, LK06 underlines the fact that literature “may instill a lifelong joy of reading and provide a deeper understanding of oneself and others” (Eng sub curriculum 2010:1).

Other competence aims such as contextually based interpretation is central in metaphor comprehension:

- understand the meaning of words and phrases based on the context they are used in
- use some stock expressions that are common in familiar situations, both orally and in writing (Eng sub curriculum 2010:4)

Vocabulary understanding in general and contextually based interpretation are closely linked, in that context clearly facilitates the comprehension of words and expressions, especially so on metaphorical expressions (Oxford 2011). Context may completely change the meaning of a word, for instance, from a literal to a metaphorical sense.

Metaphorical expressions may have a literal equivalence in English and Norwegian. LK06 requires that the pupil shall be able to:

- identify important linguistic similarities and differences between English and the native language and use this knowledge in his or her language learning
- describe and evaluate the effects of different verbal forms of expressions (Eng sub curriculum 2010:5)

In other words, they should be able to recognize and understand metaphorical expressions that have the same core meaning in English and Norwegian (linguistic similarities), but at the same time be able to recognize and understand metaphorical expressions in English that do not have the same core meaning in Norwegian (linguistic differences). Based on these specific requirements, I make a distinction between two classes of metaphors in my study:

1. Core items 1: Metaphorical expressions without a Norwegian equivalent
2. Core items 2: Metaphorical expressions with a Norwegian equivalent

To sum up, there are several aims in LK06 which undoubtedly are linked to metaphors, although implicitly. Hence, since most textbooks in Norway are based on LK06, it is important to shed light on the absence of tasks in the textbook relating to metaphor understanding in particular.

### **1.3 A brief analysis of the textbook *Targets***

*Targets* (Haugen, Haugum, Kagge, Ljones, Myskja and Rugset 2009) is a textbook designed for students in the Norwegian upper secondary school. It is one among several textbooks used to cover the current five-hour English course for Vg1, general studies. It has a complementing

website meant to improve the students' digital competence, which is an aim in LK06, and to vary the choice of exercises within the different themes in the textbook. It contains seven chapters, including themes like British and American culture, English around the world, First Nations, the English language and a reference section. In my school, this is the textbook that the teachers democratically chose for our five-hour English course for Vg1.

In the list of contents, all the texts in the book are listed according to text type. *Targets* contains a large number of short stories and novel extracts which are mostly authentic texts. The language in many of these short stories and novel extracts is, in my opinion, rather advanced for my target group. Many of the extracts are also quite long. Not unexpectedly, metaphorical expressions are to be found on every page of the book, in the texts, as well as in the tasks.

The textbook also contains factual texts, poems, song lyrics, interviews, film reviews and different types of tasks (grammar tasks, questions related to the texts, role plays, writing etc). There are 373 tasks in *Targets*, mainly divided into main categories like:

- reading for detail
- role play
- expressing opinions
- understanding literature
- writing
- language work

### **1.3.1 Lexical training in *Targets***

All in all, there are surprisingly few tasks in *Targets* related to vocabulary learning. There are a few to be found in the last category, language work. Out of the 373 tasks, only 10 are somewhat directly related to vocabulary learning, for instance one where the students are asked to find antonyms, one where they are supposed to work with word families, one with vocabulary in context, and one where they compare British and American vocabulary. In addition, there is one task concerning fixed collocations. Still, with only 10 tasks in all related to vocabulary learning (3.73% of the total number of 373 tasks), this is a remarkably low number, especially with the English subject curriculum in LK06 in mind, where the emphasis on the importance of vocabulary learning is quite strong. Notably, there are no tasks aimed at metaphor comprehension. To help broaden students' English vocabulary, the glossaries are

placed in the margin next to the texts. They are written in English and then translated into Norwegian.



#### **1.4 Previous research on metaphoric competence among EFL students**

The fact is that relatively few studies have been carried out in Norway to investigate metaphor comprehension (and production) by foreign language learners (Nacey 2010). However, there have been some interesting studies, both in Norway and internationally, and some of these will be briefly discussed here.

Deignan, Gabrys and Solska (1997) conducted a study where they investigated the levels of difficulty prevailing in the comprehension of expressions that shared conceptual metaphors in English and L1. Based on the results, they concluded that most learners would experience difficulties in making sense of a metaphorical expression in English if they did not have an equivalent conceptual metaphor in the L1. Similarly, Boers and Demecheleer (1999), through their study on the use of French idioms with similar and different English idioms, found out that if the ways in which the source domains of metaphorical expressions are used in the students' L1 are different from the English source domains, problems in comprehension most likely arise.

Song lyrics and poems are included as literary texts in teaching materials, including the textbook *Targets*. An interesting study on the interpretation of metaphorical expressions in song lyrics by EFL learners was conducted by Cardoso and Vieira (2006), which pinpoints how literary texts may be subjective and sometimes difficult to comprehend because of the number of metaphorical expressions present in this type of text. Moreover, these researchers

argue that due to their lack of linguistic and cultural knowledge either in their L1 or L2, the learners may not succeed in grasping a writer's intended meaning. Even though the metaphorical expressions were selected based on the topic LOVE, and the fact that the songs were popular, contemporary songs that most students would be familiar with, their results showed that the students often failed to immediately understand the metaphors. "The students' proficiency level and differences between metaphor receivers and producers" (Cardoso and Vieira 2006:1) might be the reason for their lack of understanding. Due to what seems to be linguistic and cultural restraints, the learners had problems understanding the songwriter's intended meaning. This supports my impression that many students' proficiency level at Vg 1 is inadequate in terms of interpreting metaphorical expressions found in the textbook.

Lise Iversen Kulbrandstad (1998) studied the comprehension of the metaphorical expression *medaljens bakside* among a group of minority students. Her results clearly support Anne Golden's (2005) study that elements such as metaphorical expressions pose a challenge when it comes to mastering a foreign language. Most of the students knew the meaning of the word *a medal*, but were unable to read beyond a literal interpretation of the word, as used in *medaljens bakside* (Low 2010).

Anne Golden's (2005) study of Norwegian pupils' metaphor comprehension revealed a gap in comprehension between the linguistic minority students and those with Norwegian as their mother tongue. The minority students were found to understand considerably less than the students with Norwegian as their mother tongue. She investigated 15-year-old Norwegian students' comprehension of metaphorical expressions in school books. In Golden's (2005) study, 50 metaphorical expressions from nine different textbooks in lower secondary school were presented in a multiple choice task to 400 students. These expressions were in Norwegian. Within this group of 15-year-olds, 40% had Norwegian as their second language. Some of the metaphorical expressions turned out to be more complicated than others, especially for the minority students.

Susan Nacey (2010) conducted an investigation of the use of metaphor in learner-produced written English among advanced Norwegian speakers of English and British A-level students. Even though her investigation was on metaphor production as opposed to metaphor comprehension, I will briefly refer to it, because in metaphoric competence, production and comprehension are equally important. Nacey's (2010) study is based on the method of Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis. She investigated argumentative essays in two



computerized corpora. Her main goal was to find out if there were significant differences between the two groups in their production of metaphors. In her work she talks about metaphorical competence of a learner. She describes this as a separate field of competence and claims that the learners' problems are not related to communicative or grammatical proficiency. "Metaphorical competence concerns the ability to **understand** and produce linguistic metaphors, or the ability to decode and encode metaphorically structured concepts" (Nacey 2010:32). Research of metaphorical competence shows that there are individual differences in both the tendency to utilize and **interpret** metaphorical expressions. For L2 language learners these differences are linked to two main factors; differences in their cultural background and their overall poorer vocabulary compared to native speakers. Nacey (2010) claims that to **interpret** and produce metaphorical expressions are often thought of as more difficult in an L2 than in the L1 (my highlights). Her study supports my perception of metaphor comprehension among L2 learners and hence also my research questions.

Melissa Kosciuk (2003) conducted a research to investigate how two L2 learners understood metaphors in a metaphorically rich text. Although she only had two students in her test, it is interesting to shed some light on her result; that the students found it difficult to understand metaphors in the text. Her small, but interesting research contributes to a strengthening of my hypothesis on metaphor comprehension. To sum up, the results of these studies mentioned above imply a need of investigating metaphor comprehension further.

In the next chapter different theories on metaphor and metaphor comprehension will be presented. This is to explain the notion of metaphor (which is the underlying basis of my study) and to present different views on metaphor processing, which are clearly relevant when discussing my results in chapter 5. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) work will be emphasized due to their leading position within the field of metaphor research.

## 2.0 Theory on Metaphors

This chapter presents definitions of metaphor, theory on metaphors in general and how we process metaphors. When we talk about metaphors we usually place them in the category of figurative speech. However, figurative speech is more than just metaphors. It also contains expressions such as idioms, phrasal verbs, similes, synecdoche and metonymies. In the present thesis, I have decided to focus on metaphors, idioms and phrasal verbs respectively, as they are represented in the examples in the multiple choice test. In the following chapter, they will be explained and linked to L2 learning.

### 2.1. What is a metaphor?

It is astonishing what a language can do. With a few syllables it can express an incalculable number of thoughts, so that even a thought grasped by a terrestrial being for the very first time can be put into a form of words which will be understood by someone to whom the thought is entirely new (Frege 1923/77 cited in Carston 1002:15).

“Metaphors often allow us to express subtle nuances of thought and feeling that would otherwise be inexpressible” (Ritchie 2006:2). Personally, I think metaphors enrich our language and allow us to play with words and meanings. “Playfulness is apparent in our approach to language from the beginning” (Ritchie 2006:5).

Metaphors are everywhere. They are not only features of language, but are also natural parts of our daily life presented in drawings, gestures, as symbols or signs to convey a message (MacArthur 2012). An enormous amount of metaphors are used in spoken, as well as written language. The endless flow of metaphors in texts and conversations is something which most people never think about. They are just there, as a part of the language. The fact is that we are surrounded by embedded metaphors “at every point of our social lives, and which we are dealing with in one way or another at every moment” (Punter 2007:56). Punter (2007) claims that: “There are barely any words that can be uttered which will not carry and invoke a metaphorical dimension” (Punter 2007:74). Based on this obvious role that metaphors play in our language, I argue that metaphors as a phenomenon seem to be neglected in foreign language teaching and learning.

When we speak or write there is often a deviation between what the words we use denote and what is actually being meant by the utterance containing these words. Metaphors are naturally

embedded in a language and are used as “a vehicle for conveying what is meant” (Carston 2002: 16). Through metaphors things are being said to communicate something else, often used to convey thoughts and utterances in a more creative and fascinating way (Carston 2002). Metaphors contribute in our understanding of concepts that sometimes are difficult to express in a literal way (Cardoso and Vieira 2006).

Most metaphors used in daily conversations and texts are well-known and understood by most native speakers of a given language, even if the ideas they convey aren't expressed in a literal way. Often, metaphorical expressions and words are not even thought of as having a different interpretation or meaning than what is commonly understood by these expressions and words. However, when we learn a foreign language one of the factors that may make the process of learning and understanding difficult, is precisely metaphors. Anne Golden's (2005) study on metaphorical comprehension supports this (cf. chapter 1). How words are combined to express a meaning may be very different from language to language. Some metaphors are also hard to grasp, for example among students who don't read a lot or have a limited vocabulary in both their mother tongue and their second language (or even a third language).

Metaphor is a way of expressing oneself comparing one thing to another, often by saying that one thing is another. The purpose of describing someone by using a metaphor, like “*he is a lion*”, is to achieve a rhetorical and artistic effect. “Metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain” (Kövecses 2002:4). In the sentence “*he is a lion*”, the “he” person obviously shares certain qualities with a *lion*. The two entities have something in common. Hence, it is possible to make the metaphorical identification of the two (Kövecses 2002). Saying that someone is a *lion* may create the impression that this is a strong, obstinate, majestic, calculating and/or graceful person. The way in which *lion* is used metaphorically is “a characteristic of a linguistic expression” (that of the word *lion*) (Kövecses 2002:vii). Most metaphors, however, are not expressed in the *A is B* format, where it is often quite easy to see the resemblance between the two.

Andrew Goatly (1997) refers to traditional definitions of metaphors, or figurative language, as a special way of using language. Earlier metaphors were associated with art and literature, for example by philosophers. During the last three decades this view has changed, and metaphors are considered a natural part of our thoughts and language. Goatly (1997) agrees with Lakoff & Johnson (1980), that metaphors entail mental processes. He claims that “the metaphors we use structure our thinking, hiding some features of the phenomena we apply them to, and

highlighting others” (Goatly 1997: 2). In other words, metaphors are used to express different distinctions in a sentence, and through these we can choose whether we want to highlight or emphasize something or if we want to moderate something. This can be done deliberately or unconsciously.

“The larger the gap between the proposition expressed and the meaning intended, the more metaphorical the utterance will be” (Goatly 1997:15). The more metaphorical language expressed, the greater the risk of unsuccessful communication. If there is a small gap between the proposition expressed and the meaning intended, the language tends to be more literal and the meaning is easier to grasp. Sperber and Wilson (1986) in particular, support this view. They claim that it is the extent of the gap that determines the distinction between literal and metaphorical language (Goatly 1997). In other words, that the proposition expressed is the proposition obtained on the basis of a literal interpretation of the words used.

Consider the following example from *Targets*:

- *She was hunting frantically in the back of the car* (task 6 in the test)

Language sometimes expresses something through metaphors which makes it easier to understand the process of something. The literal interpretation of *hunting* is *the activity of hunting wild animals or game* (<http://www.ordnett.no>). This is what we according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) refer to as the source domain. *Hunting* is usually done with some kind of weapon in order to kill an animal. Here however, *hunting* collocates with *frantically* and because of this one realizes that the person’s behavior in being frantic, together with *hunting* and being *in the back of a car* might mean something else than the literal interpretation of *hunt*. The woman was in the process of searching for something (in the car). Together with *frantically*, *hunting* is used in the sense of looking desperately for something. It indicates a sort of *hunting*, but not *hunting* for animals. The source domain *hunt* is mapped onto *to look* or *search for something*, which is what Lakoff and Johnson (1980) refer to as the target domain. *Look for* is viewed in terms of *hunt* (Kövecses 2002). Probably, most people can easily imagine the body language a person has when he or she is out hunting (in its literal sense), and then transfer this to a similar type of action, which in this example happens to be *in the back of the car*. When you *hunt* (physically), you look thoroughly for something. When we encounter a word, like *hunt* in this example, we usually activate “one or more of the primary perceptual simulators associated with its conventional referent” (Ritchie 2006:170). This often means the literal interpretation of the word or words associated with it, like

animals, action, shooting, and weapons. When a straightforward interpretation does not seem meaningful, the primary simulators are suppressed. As we have seen with *hunting frantically*, especially context becomes relevant in the process of interpretation (Ritchie 2006).

### **2.1.1 Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory**

Through their research, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) challenged the common conceptions of metaphor that used to prevail among linguistic circles. They discharged the notion of metaphor as a property of words that was deliberately used, a type of figurative speech we could do without and as something that required talent to use properly (Kövecses 2002:viii). They also challenged the assumption that mind is separate from body (Ritchie 2006:3). Their cognitive linguistic view of metaphor implied that metaphor is used constantly and effortlessly by everyone, it is a property of concepts, not words, and that “metaphor is an inevitable process of human thought and reasoning” (Kövecses 2002:viii).

Compared to definitions of metaphors in general, Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) definition of metaphor has been somewhat controversial, and still is. In their opinion most people think that a metaphor is not considered a part of everyday language, but is more a special or extraordinary type of language. In addition, they claim that people link metaphors to words and how they are strung together, rather than ideas or action. As a result people might even think that metaphors are unnecessary in order to communicate. Lakoff and Johnson (1980), however, claim that “our conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:3). This means that in general, we are not aware of our conceptual system when we think or interact with other people. Mostly, this is done unconsciously. They argue that “human thought processes are largely metaphorical” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:6). In other words, this is what they mean when they say that “the human conceptual system is metaphorically structured and defined” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:6). Hence, they claim that due to their belief that there are metaphors in our conceptual system, metaphorical expressions are possible. When they describe metaphors in their research, such as LOVE IS A JOURNEY, metaphors mean metaphorical concepts (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:8). In their work they draw attention to the cognitive functions of metaphors, as opposed to only lexical function.

One central effect of using metaphors is that the speaker or writer can express an abstract concept through a concrete concept, because abstract concepts or language might be more difficult to grasp than a language consisting of more concrete concepts. Hence, one can use

more concrete concepts to facilitate abstract concepts or language (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Consider the sentence:

- *I tried to keep my eyes on the boy from then on* (task 25 in the test)

This sentence contains the metaphorical expression (an idiom) *keep one's eyes on*. However, a distinction must be made between two levels of metaphors: metaphorical linguistic expressions and conceptual metaphors. The expression *to keep my eyes on* is a metaphorical linguistic expression of the VISUAL FIELDS ARE CONTAINERS conceptual metaphor, “given that a bounded physical space is a CONTAINER and that our field of vision correlates with that bounded physical space” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:30). Hence, there is a distinction between a conceptual metaphor with the form *A is B* and its metaphorical linguistic expression (Goatly 1997).

To explain this further, this means that conceptual metaphors have something listed underneath the actual metaphors being used. For example:

- *I'm at a crossroads in my life*
- *To reach the end of the road*

First of all, one needs to understand the metaphorical meaning of *crossroads* and *reach the end* of something. That would be the metaphorical linguistic expressions used in these two sentences. Underneath these two there is also the notion of LIFE AS A JOURNEY, which would be the conceptual metaphor that these two expressions have in common. We need to possess certain knowledge of different concepts in order to use them to understand others. Conceptual metaphors are like domains which characterize certain expressions or concepts. LOVE, for example, might also be conceptualized as a JOURNEY. The linguistic expressions and utterances relating to LOVE have literal denotation relating to journeys, such as in “*Where are we?*” This question meaning; “Where are we in our relationship right now? Are we, for example, going to take it a step further and get married?” would be a metaphorical linguistic expression underneath the source domain *journey* (Kövecses 2002). Both LOVE and LIFE are conceptualized in terms of a journey (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

Through their research on linguistics, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claim to have found evidence for their assertion that metaphors are naturally embedded in our minds. To support this they have listed a number of different examples where metaphors are used:

- He *shot* down all of my arguments.
- I've never *won* an argument with her.
- He *attacked* every weak point in my argument.

To scrutinize the notion of conceptual metaphors, an explanation of the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR is appropriate when looking at these sentences. This particular conceptual metaphor is often used to describe Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory on conceptual metaphors in general. Such concepts structure our everyday activities. For instance, when we argue, the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor structures the actions we perform (cf. the three sentences above). We do more than just talk about arguments in terms of war, we see our interlocutor as an opponent, and we win or lose, plan, attack and use strategies. In other words, what we do in an argument is partially structured by this concept of war (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

However, it is important to be aware of the fact that even though Lakoff and Johnson (1980) consider conceptual metaphors to be universal and naturally embedded in our minds, there may be cultural differences. This means that some cultures may see arguments, for example, in terms of something else than a war. "The most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:22). Naturally, fundamental values vary within cultures, and these different values may affect the underlying concepts of a metaphorical expression in the different cultures. Hence, being a foreign language learner seeking language development requires knowledge about the target language culture. "A knowledge of shared cultural references is necessary (...) to understand and produce the target language with any degree of accuracy" (Lantolf 1999 in Littlemore & Low 2006:9). If foreign language learners lack important background knowledge they may struggle to interpret expressions that seem rather straightforward. It may lead to misunderstandings of the connotations of such expressions (Littlemore and Low 2006: 10). I agree that background knowledge about the target language's culture is essential in the process of language learning. Even though we share quite a few fundamental values with English-speaking countries such as Great Britain and the USA, there are cultural differences we need to acknowledge in order to achieve successful communication. We bring our culture with us in everything we do and experience. Hence, we need to be aware of cultural differences.

“Every experience takes place within a vast background of cultural presuppositions. All experience is cultural through and through, that we experience of “world” in such a way that our culture is already present in the very experience itself” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:57).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) disagree with Western tradition within language research, that concepts are conscious and literal. On the contrary, as stated above, they claim that they are quite the opposite. Furthermore, they have discovered that there are metaphors that seem universal, whereas others are subject to cultural variation.

Consequently, they claim that our conceptual system contains metaphors. “The words we use give us access to the metaphors which structure our thought. Hence, metaphors operate on both the linguistic and conceptual levels simultaneously” (Nacey 2010:9). As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state that our thought processes are, to a large extent, metaphorical, language containing metaphors should be processed as quickly as language without metaphors (Gibbs 2008). In a native language, I agree that this is usually the case. This process in an L2, however, is most likely not as smooth as in a native language, all language related challenges considered.

The metaphor system we possess is grounded in experience (Gibbs 2008). Moreover, there are metaphors that seem to be found in nearly all languages. Some conceptual metaphors are universal, such as the notion of *down/low* and *up/high* to refer to quantities (Moon 2005). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the reason why these metaphors are to be found in languages across the world, is that several conceptual metaphors originally developed due to basic human experiences, like direction and position in space (Moon 2005). Hence, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) often connect the underlying metaphor of a literal concept to embodied physical experience. “All basic sensimotor concepts are literal, in the sense that they are directly abstracted from physical interaction with the environment” (Ritchie 2006:32). One might suspect, then, that these types of metaphors which exist across languages and cultures are easier to comprehend in a foreign language.

To sum up, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claim that “metaphor is pervasive both in thought and everyday language (Kövecses 2002:viii). They see the mind as a function of the body (Ritchie 2006:3). Our bodily experiences shape how we conceptualize abstract ideas such as emotions and time. Furthermore, they claim that “the entire apparatus of abstract expressions is metaphorically structured” (Holme 2004:23). This means that “we can only refer to abstract ideas by conceptualizing them as phenomena that can be possessed through the senses”



(Holme 2004:24). Language is seen “as providing data that can lead to general principles of understanding” (Lakoff and Johnson 2003:116). This means that rather than single words or concepts, these general concepts contain whole systems of content. Such general principles often seem to have a metaphoric nature. This is why metaphors are unavoidable. Especially abstract concepts contain different sets of metaphors. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) conclude “that we live our lives on the basis of inferences we derive via metaphor” (Lakoff and Johnson 2003:273).

Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) research has been crucial in terms of shedding light on how certain linguistic phenomena work. Through experiments they have proven that metaphors function as a main element in organizing human thought. Their work on cognitive linguistics has entailed more focus on figurative language in foreign language teaching and learning, in other words, the importance of metaphoric competence.

Without the ability to think metaphorically, we would be rather dysfunctional. There are few words that do not “carry or invoke a metaphorical dimension”, and without the ability to interpret these words many utterances would be perceived as meaningless (Punter 2007:74). In other words, our language would be very restricted.

### **2.1.2 Criticism of Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) conceptual metaphor theory**

Vervaeke and Kennedy (1996) disagree with Lakoff and Johnson’s theory that we interpret a “given metaphorical expression according to a single underlying conceptual metaphor” (Ritcie 2006:40). Through their criticism, they undermine the hierarchy of primary and derived or composite metaphors”. Moreover, they object to the notion that somehow complex metaphors have to be formed through integration of simple ones. They claim that metaphors can originate in rhetorically-structured relationships among phrases and words (Ritchie 2006).

Barsalou (1999a) attacks Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) claim that feelings like *anger* “are experienced solely as abstractions, by way of metaphors”, and states that we have direct embodied experience of feelings (Ritchie 2006:40).

Based on the amount of metaphors we use and come across, and how we seem to process most metaphors like any other types of linguistic expressions, I support Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) conceptual metaphor theory. I agree that we have conceptual metaphors embedded in

our minds and that they seem to be universal. However, they are the creators behind all the conceptual domains and one could discuss to what extent they all are “true” and appropriate.

## 2.2 Transparency

When we talk about metaphorical expressions and transparency, the latter is related to the degree of how easy or difficult it is to get at the meaning of the expression. For expressions with high transparency, like the idiom *keeping someone at arm's length*, the meaning is usually easier to understand than with expressions with low transparency, such as *kick the bucket*. Barcelona (2001) uses the term “metaphorical transparency for those cases in which a metaphorical expression belonging to a conceptual metaphor in one language is more or less transparent than an expression belonging to the same conceptual metaphor in another language” (Kövecses 2005:151). He claims that in order to measure transparency, it is necessary to figure out whether “an expression is used in the target domain only or in both the source and target domains” (Kövecses 2005:151). If these expressions can be used in both the source domain and the target domain, they are highly transparent as metaphors. He refers to conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY as an example. LOVE IS A JOURNEY is expressed linguistically in much the same way in English and Norwegian. Two linguistic expressions with the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY; *we have to go our separate ways* and *vi må gå hver vår vei* are highly transparent due to their linguistic similarity (Kövecses 2005:158). Highly transparent expressions are represented in the test, and the question is whether or not highly transparent expressions are easier for foreign language learners to process?

Transparency is often linked to imageability. Imageable idioms are those who have associated conventional images (Boers and Demecheleer 1999). Moreover, if the individual words in an expression contribute to its interpretation, the expression tends to be more transparent. The lower the transparency, the more context is usually needed to get at the intended meaning of the expression. However, most expressions are met in some type of context, which clearly makes the processing easier (Cooper 1999).

Conventional metaphors, or metaphors that are familiar and used again and again, are transparent. Idioms are conventional because they are often institutionalized in a language, and hence they are easily recognizable. Most of the time, these metaphors are so transparent that we do not even consider them as such (Kövecses 2002). A metaphor is considered highly conventional when it is deeply entrenched in “everyday use by ordinary people for ordinary

purposes” (Kövecses 2002:29). The idiom *cold fish* (cf. appendix 2: task 3) is an example of a conventionalized metaphor, both in English and as *kald fisk* in Norwegian. Novel metaphors, or metaphors that are unfamiliar and more creative, are less transparent and thus harder to grasp. Novel metaphors are often found in poetry and literature (Kövecses 2002). These factors listed imply that novel metaphors are more likely to pose difficulties in comprehension for L2 learners.

Also the culture-specific grounding is a variable in affecting the degree of semantic transparency. Conventions are not the same in every culture, hence “the imageable idioms of a given language may not call up the same conventional scenes in the minds of learners of that language” (Boers and Demecheleer 1999: 256).

### **2.3 Idioms**

Idioms are conventionalized phrases *such as armed to the teeth* and *teach someone a lesson*. “The meaning of the whole phrase is different from the meaning which might be produced by interpreting the individual words in the phrase” (Knowles and Moon 2006:19). Idioms often differ in terms of transparency. Some are more or less transparent, and then it is easier to “see why they mean what they do” (Knowles and Moon 2006:19). Others are difficult to retract any meaning from at all, and they are referred to as opaque. In addition, the origin of these opaque idioms is obscure (Knowles and Moon 2006:19). Traditionally, idioms have been viewed as linguistic in nature, as a matter of language alone. The cognitive view of idioms, however, is that they are conceptual in nature (Kövecses 2002:201).

Several types of linguistic expressions can be listed in the category of idioms, expressions such as metonymies, metaphors, phrasal verbs, sayings, pairs of words and others (Kövecses 2002:199). Idioms are mostly fixed, which means that their wording is always the same. If they are interpreted literally, as with metaphorical expressions in general, they would most likely be perceived as meaningless or false.

“Idioms are a notoriously difficult area for language learning and teaching” (Kövecses 2002:199). As many idioms are opaque, they are often perceived as difficult among foreign language learners. As mentioned above, knowing the meaning of the individual words in an idiom might not be helpful at all in order to get at the idiom’s intended meaning. Moreover, some idioms are culturally restricted and reside in a language learners are in the process of acquiring, and hence are not too familiar with. I agree with Kövecses (2002) that idioms are

challenging to language learners. Hence, they need to be implemented in language teaching and learning to the same extent as other types of vocabulary.

## 2.4 Phrasal verbs

“As a preliminary definition, phrasal verbs can be said to possess some degree of idiomaticity in the assembly of the verb plus preposition (cry over something), or verb plus separable particle (run up the flag, run the flag up), verb plus inseparable particle (run up a debt), or the double assembly of verb plus particle and preposition (face up to problems). Crucial in the differentiation of phrasal verbs is the special “constructional” contribution of the original preposition or particle to the whole” (Dirven 2001:39).

A great number of phrasal verbs are metaphorical. According to Moon (2005), the meanings of phrasal verbs are often hard to recall. The reason for this is that “phrasal verbs seem to have no connection with the words that they consist of (the verb and the particle)” (Moon 2005:1). Phrasal verbs consist of a verb (for example *turn*, *knock* and *go*) and a particle (for example a preposition like *to* and *off*, or an adverb like *down*). Together they form a single semantic unit. In the metaphorical expression *knock off*, for example, the meaning must be taken as a whole, and cannot be grasped grounded on the meanings of each word in isolation. The meaning the verb and the preposition or particle form together is often a whole lot different than one might expect based on their individual meaning. Hence, when a verb and one or more particles collocate it is usually quite obvious that they form a metaphorical expression, and not a literal one, as with *knock off*:

- *We would play cards at night when she knocked off*

*Knock* is a word with multiple meanings. L2 learners have a challenge in learning the different meanings of a word in English, especially since many words often carry more than one sense. When we look up the word *knock* on *Ordnett*, eight different meanings of *knock* alone are listed. When a particle is added, the list is almost endless. The literal interpretation of *knock* is physical, meaning to *hit*. This is the most familiar meaning of the word. In the example above, *knock* and *off* form a metaphorical expression (here: to sleep, take a nap). *Off* also has multiple meanings, but in this example the interpretation *starting a journey; leaving* (<http://www.ordnett.no>) together with *knock* form an entirely new expression with a meaning not immediately obvious to a reader or a listener. Context is crucial in interpreting the meaning here, as it mostly is with metaphors (Cooper 1999).

Furthermore, it is more obvious when a verb is used metaphorically than a particle. Even if this is the case, the connection between the literal meaning of a particle and its metaphorical uses is still quite clear. This can be explained by comparing the metaphorical uses of the particles with their literal meanings. The literal, basic meanings of adverbs and prepositions refer to distance, direction, position in space, or extent, and the metaphorical meanings have derived from these (<http://www.macmillandictionaries.com>). The adverb *down*, for example, has a literal meaning denoting a movement towards a lower position, as in *he walked down the stairs*. Used metaphorically *down* denotes a decrease in number, strength, or size, as in *the numbers went down*. In my multiple choice test, I used a metaphorical expression where *down* was used a preposition, actually in its literal form. However, used in its literal sense together with a verb like *go*, and the preposition *with*, it has a metaphorical meaning mapped on to it, as in *the captain of the Titanic, Edward Smith, went down with his ship*. Here, in the expression *go down with*, *down* describes direction, but in the sense of drowning and that one then physically sinks downwards.

Phrasal verbs seem to pose a challenge for EFL learners because “very few languages have phrasal verbs like English” (Moon 2005:2). This type of verbs is extremely common in English. My impression is that the enormous dimension of phrasal verbs in English poses a challenge for L2 learners because it means that it is necessary to know the range of many different words and collocations in order to understand and communicate successfully. To know the basic meaning of a word is not enough to fully understand texts and utterances. Due to these facts, a number of phrasal verbs were included in the multiple choice test.

To sum up, how researchers perceive metaphors have changed during the last decades. Metaphors are more than linguistic devices. They reflect fundamental structures of our thought, as well as cognition. We are constantly surrounded by embedded metaphors, and we have to deal with them in one way or another (Punter 2007).

### **2.3 Metaphor interpretation/processing**

In the present section I will take a closer look at how metaphors are interpreted. Central for metaphorical interpretation is inference. How the processing of metaphorical expressions takes place, is still a topic among language researchers. If the processing of metaphors is equal to the processing of other linguistic expressions as some researchers claim, would they not be perceived as equally understandable?

Goatly (1997) emphasizes the importance of knowing how communication works to be able to understand the difference between literal and metaphorical language. How people express themselves and how they infer meaning are crucial in order to achieve successful communication. How we interpret an utterance is an important part of literal language theory. If a listener finds an utterance literally untrue, he or she has to look for a different meaning, most likely expressed by figurative language then (Saeed 2009).

### **2.5.1 The Cooperative Principle**

Grice (1975) introduced what he called the Cooperative Principle (CP). The Cooperative Principle is as follows:

Make your contribution such as required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged (Grice in Thomas 1995:62).

Grice (1975) assumed that when people interact, a certain set of rules is being followed because they want to cooperate with each other. However, when people interact and do not operate according to the same set of rules, misconceptions may occur. If a speaker fails to operate according to the Cooperative Principle, the hearer might have to search for an alternative interpretation (Thomas 1995). This is often the case with metaphors. If an utterance seems untrue, the hearer has to search for an implicature, a conveyed meaning (Yule 1996:35). This can be related to the question of how intended meanings are arrived at. Grice (1975) sheds light on this through his set of maxims. Together with his Cooperative Principle he also developed four maxims, which are recognized as “unstated assumptions we have in conversations” (Yule 1996:37): maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of relation and manner of manner. These again, have sub-categories (Thomas 1995).

Grice emphasizes the importance of a speaker being truthful in order to communicate successfully. Metaphors flout the maxim of Quality. “Do not say what you believe to be false” (Knowles and Moon 2006:68). Grice (1975) claims that metaphors flout this maxim because they are not true. Hence, to make the utterance comprehensible, a reader or listener needs to search for a nonliteral meaning in order to sustain the Cooperative Principle. These nonliteral meanings require three clear processing stages:

1. Derive the literal meaning of the utterance.
2. Assess the interpretability of that meaning in the utterance context.

3. If the literal meaning does not make sense in context, then search for a nonliteral meaning that does. (Gibbs 2008:67).

Several of Grice's (1975) maxims are breached when using metaphorical language. The maxims of Manner and Quality are especially flouted by literary metaphors, because this type of metaphors is often unclear, under-informative or excessively informative. Readers then need to make a number of inferences to get at the speaker or writer's intended meaning (Knowles and Moon 2006). Since metaphorical expressions are not literally interpreted, they are often more difficult to comprehend. As mentioned in section 2.2, the less transparent they are, the more difficult they are to comprehend. The more inferences needed to get at the intended meaning, the harder the processing effort. L2 learners' challenge is that they have to make these efforts in a foreign language.

Implicatures from a sentence can state something literally, but also there is an intention that the addressee may draw further implications from it (Carson 2002). On the one hand, we talk about the linguistic meaning of an utterance or a phrase. That means what information is encoded in the lexical-syntactic form utilized. On the other hand, there is the idea, or proposition, utilized to express what is being said (Carson 2002). As mentioned above, there often seems to be a difference between the linguistic content of a sentence and the intended implications of the speaker or writer.

### **2.5.2 Sperber and Wilson's (1986) relevance theory**

Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson's (1986) relevance theory emphasizes the operation of the maxim of Relation (following Grice's work) (Knowles and Moon 2006). They consider relevance the crucial factor in how we interpret utterances, and they focus on "the mechanisms of how we make use of contextual meaning and make inferences in making appropriate interpretations" (Knowles and Moon 2006:69). At the heart of their relevance theory lies "the extent to which the cognitive effort required to make sense of a communicative act will be rewarded by cognitive effects. An ostensive act that can be interpreted with minimal effort is more relevant than one that can be understood only after extensive effort" (Ritchie 2006:78). Ostensive acts are acts that are not lexically encoded, but make us aware through the way they are expressed that they definitely intend to communicate something. This is linked to Goatly's (1997) view mentioned above, and builds on Grice's (1975) Cooperative principle that any ostensive act is an attempt to communicate an idea, and

on most occasions we are interested in making sense of this idea and put in the effort required to interpret it (Ritchie 2006).

The pragmatic theories of communication described above make it clear that when we interact, we presume that the speaker supplies all the information relevant and necessary for us to convey his or her intended meaning. This means that if we interpret metaphors literally they would most likely be perceived as nonsensical and irrelevant. Usually, being a reader or a listener you assume that the writer or speaker expresses something meaningful, and hence you need to interpret the utterance metaphorically in order for it to make sense (Knowles and Moon 2006).

According to Sperber and Wilson's (1986) relevance theory, to be able to interpret metaphors, mental processes must be employed. Semantic decoding is not enough to grasp the actual meaning of a metaphor or a metaphorical expression. It will only lead to a literal interpretation. Three important factors need to be considered when the principles and processes involved in metaphor interpretation are discussed. How metaphors are interpreted depends on the interplay between these three:

1. Knowledge of the language system
2. Knowledge of the context: situation and co-text
3. Background schematic knowledge: factual and socio-cultural (Goatly 1997:137).

First, knowledge of the language will be the starting point of the interpretation. Second, knowledge from the context and the physical and social situation is added. This type of knowledge is knowledge retrieved there and then, based on the situation and co-text within it occurs. In our short-term memory we have various contextual assumptions. Third, our knowledge about the world, as well as a socio-cultural aspect (the society of our language community) may be included in processing metaphors. These are stored in our long-term memory (Goatly 1997). If the following sentence (from *Targets* and task 17) were to be interpreted literally, a reader or a listener most likely would not perceive it as very meaningful:

- *What do you think led to this change of heart?*

Usually, when a person physically has to change a heart, we talk in terms of a heart transplant. Moreover, in all probability, based on the composition of the words in this question, it would



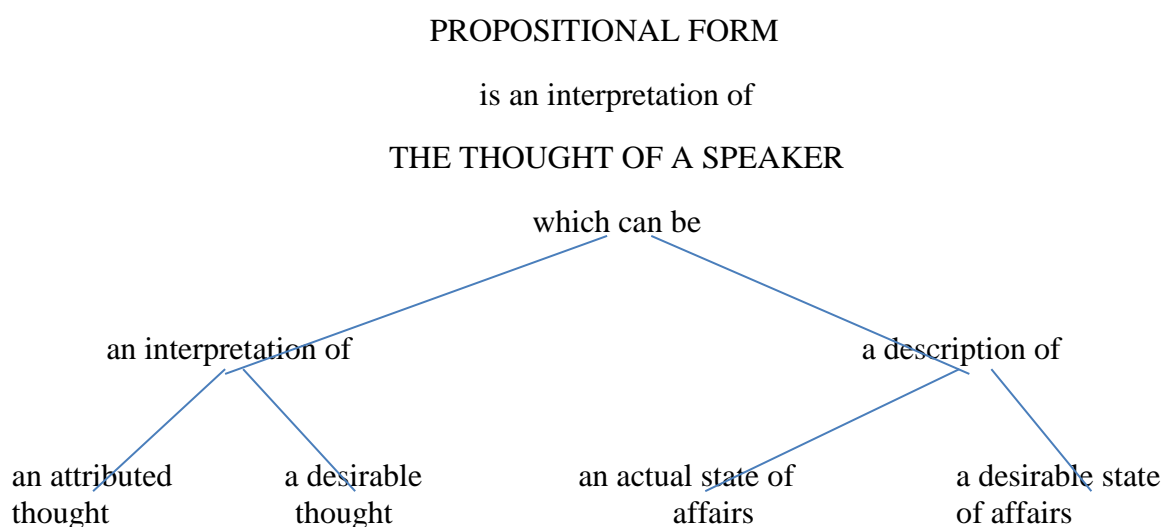
be perceived as being strange if interpreted literally. Hence, it has to mean something else, and the reader or listener would have to infer a different meaning from this sentence in order for it to make sense. Based on this context only, it is not easy for the students to draw the inference that *change of heart* means to *change one's opinion*. Neither do we have a corresponding expression in Norwegian.

In the process of learning a foreign language, learners usually do not have adequate knowledge of the language system or background knowledge. However, the learners usually have knowledge of the context (texts, role plays, discussions etc). But as we have seen, according to relevance theory, metaphors are interpreted based on an interplay between these three factors. Hence, learners will mostly process metaphors at higher costs if one or two of these factors are absent. This may lead to literal interpretations, or there is the potential danger (for example in a multiple choice test) that the participants might only guess which answer is correct.

Sperber and Wilson (1986) made a system for accounting for what they call propositional attitudes, or in other words, different illocutionary forces. There is often a gap between a speaker's utterance and his or her intended meaning (the thought). However, with a propositional form the utterance is similar to the thought of a speaker. "Often, there are cases of approximation because the standard for communication is not truth but relevance" (Goatly 1997:141).

### Figure 1: Propositional form

This is diagrammed as:



(Goatly1997:141).

Usually, based on our wish for optimal relevance when we communicate (cf Grice 1975), we use a propositional form more or less approximate to our thoughts. To explain this further: “Metaphoric and literal utterances do not involve distinct kinds of interpretation: there is a literal –metaphorical cline and what varies is the degree of similarity between the speaker’s thought and the propositional form of the utterance” (Goatly 1997:141). Furthermore, this distinction between metaphor and literal interpretation is blurred. Literal and metaphorical language is a continuum, where we have approximation in between.

### **2.5.3 Additional views on metaphor interpretation**

According to Littlemore (2004), there are two prevailing theories when it comes to metaphor interpretation. The traditional view on metaphor interpretation is that readers or listeners need to analyze and reject the literal meanings of these expressions in order to interpret them correctly. This is why possible literal meanings of the metaphorical expressions in the test in this thesis often were listed as alternatives in the multiple choice tasks. The main aim obviously: To find out whether or not the students were capable of analyzing and most likely rejecting these literal interpretations. However, more recent view on metaphor interpretation indicates that access to complete literal interpretation is not needed in order to understand them. Usually, the metaphorical expressions are easily perceived based on the context in which they are set. Then, the question is; is context a part of the processing right from the start, or is it a tool for interpretation once a literal interpretation has been discarded (Littlemore 2004)? In my opinion, both of these theories are obviously essential when we interpret metaphors.

Littlemore (2004) states that an identification of a type of connection between the source domain and the target domain is necessary to achieve successful metaphor comprehension. In other words, a wide range of connotations for both the source and the target domain is needed to process and interpret metaphorical expressions. Then, these connotations referred to by a certain speaker or writer in a certain context need to be identified by the listener or reader. The foreign language learner’s schemata are important in finding the appropriate connotations in the interpretation process. In my opinion, vocabulary also plays a decisive role in this process. If the words in the linguistic expressions are incomprehensible, the appropriate schemata will not be activated.

In general, for native speakers, interpreting metaphors through a wide range of connotations for both the source and the target domain is an easy and natural process. To understand a person's intended meaning is facilitated by means such as a common language, culture, shared knowledge and context. However, this is not always the case for language learners. Due to the fact that language learners may have other sets of connotations than native speakers, difficulties may arise. Even if similar sets of connotations between a native speaker and a language learner exist, the latter may transfer the wrong connotation. Access to a wide range of connotations for the source domain is particularly needed for language learners, as well as context to decide which connotation is most appropriate (Littlemore 2004). In her studies on metaphor strategies used by students, Littlemore (2004) found that the strategies students use varies according to several factors. These are factors such as the students' learning styles, the transparency of the metaphors and in which context the metaphors appear.

When interpreting metaphors, Glucksberg (1997) states that we tend to place the source and target domain of a metaphor into one category containing the attributes that they have in common. The reader or listener's knowledge of the target domain will be activated and the source domain is placed into this knowledge framework. As an example, consider the metaphorical expression: *My lawyer is a shark*. Most likely, to interpret this, a reader or listener starts off by activating prior knowledge about what types of lawyers there are. The source domain 'shark' is then used to select a suitable description between these types of lawyers (Gibbs 2008). What is important to mention here, is that research reveals problems in interpreting these types of expressions when a source domain does not match the schema for the target domain (Littlemore 2004:5). However, Littlemore underlines the fact that it is important to "go beyond the immediately obvious characteristics of the source and target domains" (Littlemore 2004:11).

Sam Glucksberg (1997) supports the view that metaphors are understood exactly as they appear and that the process is automatic. He refers to research showing that literal and figurative meanings are "computed parallel", even when there is a lack of context (Gibbs 2008). None of them have unconditional priority, and they are also processed equally fast. Furthermore, one cannot ignore neither literal nor metaphorical meaning. "When either is available, then they are processed. In some circumstances, when both are available, metaphorical meanings may be preferred to literal" (Gibbs 2008:70). Especially the latter point is interesting, because it supports Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory that metaphors are embedded in our minds.

#### 2.5.4 Lexical broadening and narrowing

Lexical narrowing, broadening and metaphorical extension are important in the process of interpreting metaphors. “Lexical narrowing involves the use of a word or phrase to convey a more specific concept (with a narrower denotation) than the linguistically encoded ‘literal’ meaning. For example the phrase *Bill has money* does not only denote that *Bill* belongs to a group of people who have some money, but that he actually has quite a lot of money. Kolati and Wilson (2012) claim that through lexical narrowing we interpret a metaphor based on “a wide range of contextual information in constructing an overall interpretation”. Since narrowing differs to such great extent depending on the context, they claim that it is difficult to describe “a single default rule that would provide a better starting point for constructing the full range of interpretations than the linguistically encoded ‘literal’ meaning” (Kolati and Wilson 2012:32). It is difficult to know for sure whether or not this is a process used by the students in my research. However, this is important, because I suppose that some students most likely use this common type of processing on at least some of the tasks. Moreover, when they find that they do not have sufficient context, they may not try to narrow at all and leave the interpretation open, or they only narrow to a certain extent. If narrowing fails, the interpretation most likely ends up as rather distinct. Here, relevance theory states that narrowing is not supposed to occur naturally, but is provoked by pragmatic factors. Based on this belief, narrowing will stop once the listener or speaker finds the utterance relevant enough. To sum up, narrowing may be hard if the context is not rich enough.

Lexical broadening, on the other hand, “involves the use of a word or phrase to convey a more general concept (with a broader denotation) than the linguistically encoded ‘literal’ meaning” (Kolati and Wilson 2012:33) Broadening is used in the same way as narrowing to achieve meaningful interpretations. According to Wilson and Carston (2007), when we interpret a “single monosemous item” both narrowing and broadening may be used. These processes are highly context-dependent, as well as flexible (Kolati and Wilson 2012). If we take the word *princess* as an example, it might be broadened to include people who are not princesses, or narrowed to only a subset of princesses who are spoiled, indulged etc. (Kolati and Wilson 2012).

I agree with most people working on issues such as lexical pragmatics who “assume that the interpretation of a word or phrase in context involves an interaction between semantic and pragmatic factors”. This is what poses difficulties when interpreting metaphors, since the

relation between an “encoded lexical meaning and the meaning communicated by use of a word in context may be much less direct”, as opposed to the semantic view of some corpus linguists that direct meaning can be extracted through the use of a word (Kolati and Wilson 2012:42).

It is important to keep in mind that learning a language is process that takes time and involves a lot of practice and repetition. I see language learning as a lifelong process, both when you are a native speaker and a foreign language learner. There are constantly new words to be learnt and others to be forgotten. In order for language to be stored in long time memory, repetitive actions of all kinds are crucial, whether it concerns grammar, vocabulary, structure, pronunciation, or other important skills (Radić- Bojanić 2013). “The same is valid of metaphorical expressions (...), because learners first need time to understand the mechanisms behind metaphoricity, then to learn query routines and become proficient at using them, and finally to enrich their mental lexicon with additional meanings of the already familiar and known words” (Radić-Bojanić 2013:136). These processes will enhance the use of newly acquired vocabulary. Metaphors, however, are usually among the last lexical items to be acquired.

## **2.5 Metaphoric competence in L2**

“Metaphoric competence concerns the ability to understand and produce metaphor “(Nacey 2010:32). As a consequence of recent research within cognitive linguistics, the notion of metaphoric competence is currently viewed by many as equally important in second language teaching and learning as grammatical, strategic, textual, illocutionary and communicative competence (Littlemore and Low 2006). As the metaphorical structures in the minds of native speakers are mostly unconscious, metaphoric competence is seen as crucial in order to achieve fluency in second language learning: “the true sign that the learner has developed communicative proficiency is the ability to metaphorize in the target language” (Danesi 1994 in Low 2001:460). The term metaphoric competence is mostly used in L2 teaching and learning, “as production and interpretation of metaphorical expressions is often considered more challenging in an L2 than an L1” (Nacey 2010:32).

When, for example, interpreting an idiomatic expression in English, a native speaker would almost instantly infer its meaning. However, L2 learners “who encounter an unknown idiom are at distinct disadvantage because they do not possess the native speaker’s degree of linguistic competence” (Cooper 1999: 254). Due to this lack of linguistic competence, L2

learners often need to put more effort into processing the meaning of an idiomatic expression than a native speaker. Several factors will affect how and how fast they arrive at a possible interpretation. Some of these factors may be the context in which the expression occurs, the literal meaning of the expression, the target culture, and the L2 learners also have to reflect upon possible significations. To improve one's linguistic competence, and hence facilitate the processing of these types of expression, metaphoric competence is important (Cooper 1999).

Despite the fact that research speaks in favor of more focus on metaphoric competence in second language teaching, it has not yet achieved the status of a core ability (Littlemore and Low 2006). Teachers' supervision in metaphoric competence in second language learning is very important due to several reasons. Even though most conceptual metaphors seem to be universal (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), there are variations across languages, L2 learners struggle on how to use metaphors appropriately, and "the same conceptual metaphors in different languages are realized through different linguistic expressions" (Boers & Demecheleer in Low 2001:460). According to Radić- Bijanić (2013), dealing with metaphorical meaning in foreign language learning should be equally important throughout the learning process as other types of knowledge.

The main aim in L2 acquisition is communicative competence (cf. CEFR 2001). Canale & Swain (1980) first introduced a model of communicative competence (Low 2010). This later developed into a definition currently used by many teachers and testers where communicative competence is seen as comprising these four orthogonal components: "linguistic, sociolinguistic (meaning contextual appropriateness), discourse, and strategic (learning strategies and communication strategies)" (Gibbs 2008: 221). Littlemore & Low (2006) claim that metaphor skills apply to all these four components. Consequently, they underline the importance of learners at most levels acquiring metaphors. Moreover, their research displayed the fact that learners find it challenging and hard working with metaphors in all four areas within communicative competence.

Lantolf (1999) pinpoints how metaphoric competence in the L2 is also related to the L2's culture. To use and comprehend L2 with any degree of accuracy, it is important to be aware of cultural references that are shared between L1 and L2 (Littlemore and Low 2006). This is linked to the claim that cultures often make use of conceptual metaphor. Hence, knowledge about the L2 culture is essential to comprehend the connotations of straightforward expressions (Littlemore and Low 2006).

To sum up, it is essential to focus on metaphoric competence in L2 learning. Metaphorical awareness is crucial to achieve effective learning and language use. Moreover, metaphoric competence applies to all four components of communicative competence (Littlemore and Low 2006). For L2 learners, a lack of adequate vocabulary in the target language and their different cultural background might complicate metaphor comprehension and production.

“Control over metaphor is one of the essential tools for empowering learners to cope successfully with native speakers” (Littlemore and Low 2006:22).

In the next chapter an outline of the methodology will be given.

### **3.0 Methodology**

In this chapter the methodology used in my research on metaphors in *Targets* is presented.

My aim is to investigate the world of metaphors in young peoples' minds. As mentioned before, both a clear, general absence of metaphorical expressions in their written work and the feedback from my students on the level of the texts in *Targets*, made me want to investigate the students comprehension of metaphors in general. Several students had told me during obligatory subject conversations that they found many of the texts in *Targets* difficult to understand, both in terms of vocabulary as well as finding underlying themes. I also considered a type of textbook analysis to be important since classroom teaching at this level is quite textbook dependent. In my opinion, when you teach foreign languages, the textbook is the most important source used in the classroom. Hence, it is crucial that the textbook is perceived as interesting by most students in order to facilitate language learning, for instance, when it comes to the students' motivation, comprehension, possibility of language improvement, interesting themes and so on.

#### **3.1 Field investigation**

Doing real world research requires an objective and a plan on how to reach that objective. Obviously, how to reach the objective is a crucial part of the research. Among several different ways of doing real world research, surveys are commonly used. Most people are now and then asked to participate in a survey, and they are familiar with the importance of surveys within hundreds of topics across the world. Not to say, that all surveys are important or of common interest.

According to Robson (2011), there are different types of surveys; online questionnaires, telephone interviews (including digital ones), self-completion questionnaires (including postal questionnaires), and face-to-face interviews among others. The type of research to be carried out requires thorough consideration on what kind of survey is most suitable to achieve the objectives one has set (Robson 2011).

Since I was going to investigate students' comprehension of metaphorical expressions in *Targets* and I work full time, I decided to do a quantitative study. I wanted to use a questionnaire as the basis for my investigation. By using a questionnaire I would be able to deduct several sentences from the textbook and use them in a multiple choice test. Moreover,



this meant that I could ask quite a large number of students at the same time. In other words, it was pragmatic as it would allow me to collect a large amount of data in a relative little amount of time. It would also allow me to statistically analyze the data, which allows for a wide understanding of the phenomena. From this data I hoped to deduct results that would either validate or refute my hypotheses.

According to Robson (2011), non-experimental fixed designs are often used for descriptive purposes, and when the focus is set to describe or explain a phenomenon. In my case, then, this was going to be used to describe students' understanding of metaphorical expressions in *Targets*. To find out how people feel, think or what they know, Robson (2011) also mentions using standardized tests, like multiple choice tests, to measure their personality or intelligence, or to measure their abilities. Surveys are characterized by the use of a fixed, quantitative design, as well as the use of standardized questions where the respondents interpret the questions similarly. In addition, another characteristic feature is a sample taken as representative of the population, also called representative sampling. The findings of a survey may lead to statistical inferences about the population, or a group, in general (Robson 2011).

The advantages of using surveys are many. First of all, it is an easy way of conducting a research, since it may provide you with a lot of data from a large sample at a low cost, and can be conducted within a short period of time. Self-completion surveys are less time-consuming than interviews, especially since a large number of tests can be conducted at the same time. To send out reminders, for instance when doing postal questionnaires, is unnecessary since the answers will be given there and then. Through surveys it is possible to systematically gather information, or quantitative data according to different variables, and then use the findings to determine patterns. Moreover, surveys are well established tools in the study of values, attitudes, beliefs and motives. In addition, "they may be adapted to collect generalizable information from almost any human population" (Robson 2011: 241). Finally, questionnaires provide anonymity (Robson 2011). All in all, tests like these make it easier for the researcher to sort and interpret the results. The answers given can easily be dealt with in tables.

However, there are also disadvantages of using surveys as a research method. As opposed to face-to-face interviews the respondents will not have the possibility to ask questions to clarify any misunderstandings and the researcher will not be able to ask follow-up or in-depth

questions. Accordingly, questionnaires are less flexible. However, in my test there was an open question at the end of the test where they could leave a comment. Only one student wrote a comment, stating that it was a weird test. I am not sure how to interpret that.

Lack of interest or motivation and the seriousness with which the test will be treated are risks to be considered when conducting these types of surveys (Robson 2011). The data may be affected by the characteristics of the respondents; for example their experience, knowledge, memory, personality and motivation. Personally, I was a bit concerned that since my test was to be done on teenagers, some might not treat it seriously since this was done in a school lesson and something that they were asked to do in addition to regular schoolwork. Even though it was a voluntary test, and they all agreed to take the test, some students still might not take it seriously. Securing involvement was an important part of conducting the actual test in the two classes, as I will mention later in the chapter on about the test. Sometimes respondents also claim to be somebody else. There was a chance that some students might make up their personal information in the form at the end of the test, either to just have fun or avoid giving away their language background because they felt inadequate. Often people with reading or writing difficulties are less likely to respond (Robson 2011). Due to this the students were given the time they needed to complete the test and were told to read all the tasks carefully before answering. Because of the fixed design of a multiple choice questionnaire, the students might even just guess, something I expect quite a few of them did. This is inevitable in this type of survey, particularly when they know that they have to answer all the tasks.

One final important element to consider when using a multiple choice test is the fact that due to the relatively low number of respondents, just one or two incorrect answers might, also to a great extent, change the final result. If one girl of the nine respondents with Norwegian as their second language in my test has an extremely low score, the result of the group will alter quite dramatically all together. This is a crucial element to return to in the discussion part of the thesis.

The main focus in a survey is to design the questions in such a way that they help reach the objectives of the research, and especially find answers to the research questions. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that when making self-completion questionnaires its complexity should be kept to a minimum. As Robson (2011) points out, the respondents must be able to comprehend the questions as intended by the researcher, answer in the correct form

called for by the tasks given and be willing to answer them. In other words; “A major part in the art and craft of producing a questionnaire is in writing it in such a way that respondents understand what you want from them, and are happy to give it to you, while the questions at the same time remain faithful to the research task” (Robson 2011: 253). This is also important to secure internal validity. Internal validity means that one can obtain valid information from the results, on which causal claims can be made (Robson 2011:239). By making all the respondents in the survey understand the questions in the same way, it is possible to obtain valid information from the results. The fact the research was done in my own school is important to reflect upon. I sent an application to the principal asking for permission to conduct the test. I asked two classes which I did not teach to voluntarily take part in the test, which they were going to answer anonymously.

The questions and the multiple choice responses in my test were kept as short as possible and elaborated on through different stages during my preparations for the test. When constructing a set of possible fixed-alternative responses it is important to keep responses accurate, mutually exclusive, exhaustive, and on a single dimension (Robson 2011).

### **3.2 Building the experiment**

In order to investigate students’ comprehension of metaphorical expressions in *Targets*, I decided to make a multiple choice test, containing 40 multiple choice tasks. All of the examples were found in the textbook, including eight examples used as distractors (without metaphorical expressions). Originally, I started out with 50 examples, but in order not to discourage the students due to the quite large number of examples and pages to read to answer the test, I decided to lower the number of examples. This, I later discovered, was a good idea because a lot of sighing was heard among the students when they got the test and realized the number of questions they had to read in order to tick off all the answers.

Every example on the test was given in its original context, which means from the texts that they appeared in. It was important to portray the metaphorical expressions in full sentences in order to help the students see them as a whole, and clarify the sense in which they were used. This was also important since this is how the students read the metaphorical expressions in the texts. In addition, this is how language works. We seldom need to interpret words or expressions removed from context. Expressions completely removed from their context might complicate the use of an effective reading strategy as well. However, they were removed from

their larger context (theme, topic), something which could complicate the students' possibilities to interpret the metaphorical expressions based on the complete context.

The examples were taken from different texts throughout the whole book. However, it was easier to find metaphors in the short stories and the novel extracts than in the factual texts and the tasks, in other words, in texts containing literary language. The examples chosen were the ones that either belonged to the group with an English core item (called C1), that is with no Norwegian equivalent, or the ones where their core item was similar to Norwegian metaphorical expressions (called C2). Furthermore, I had to choose examples where I could make interesting and varied answers to choose between in the multiple choice part. Some of them were also chosen because of their quite frequent use or because they are well known expressions, such as "*break out in sweat*". Others were chosen because of their obvious link to a possible literal interpretation, such as "*Are the characters well drawn?*" In addition, examples that might seem rather complicated were included, for example "*he'd been living in awe of anybody with a college education*".

The distracters were placed in the test in order to avoid students from revealing the fact that the theme of my test was metaphorical expressions, something which might have led to an understanding that the correct answer might be non-literal. By placing distracters among all the metaphorical expression, the idea was to give the impression that only meaning or comprehension in general was what I was attempting to test. Furthermore, I wanted to see if the distracters were easier to comprehend than the metaphorical expressions.

Each example was given three possible meanings, where the students had to pick the one they considered was the correct one. Three alternatives were made for each metaphorical expression based on the following specifications:

- Phonemic similarity
- Orthographical similarity
- Opposite meaning
- Words with multiple meanings
- Using words in their literal sense/ physical distracter
- A similar meaning to the actual one

The correct answers (a, b or c) in the multiple choice alternatives were randomized throughout the whole test, as well as the specifications mentioned above.

Examples of alternatives used in the test, based on the different specifications listed:

- **Phonemic similarity:**

11. She told me it was wise not to sleep with him, because *then I could dump him anytime I wanted to*.

The word *thump* was put in as an alternative based on the phonemic similarity to *dump*:

b) that I could *thump* him if I had to

- **Orthographical similarity:**

1. He must have known that *she would never dare to tell him to hurry*.

The word *dare* was replaced by the orthographically similar word *dear*.

c) that he had to hurry to tell her that he was a dear friend

- **Opposite meaning:**

2. *Can textbooks be useful sources?*

*Useful* was replaced by *unimportant*, having the opposite meaning.

a) Are your textbooks unimportant?

- **Words with multiple meanings:**

32. Looking ahead, what do you think *the future holds for the father?*

The verb *hold* has multiple meanings, for example to carry or support with one's hands, or contain. Both these meanings are used in two of the alternatives given in this task.

a) What do you think the father *is holding in his hands?*

- **Using words in their literal sense:**

35. *What do you think led to this change of heart.*

Alternative b) portrays *change of heart* in its literal sense.

b) What do you think led to this *heart transplant?*

- **A similar meaning to the actual one:**

27. *She was not prepared to give it to me* because there was no way she could force Father to pay my fees in the future.

Alternative c) portrays a similar meaning to the actual one, marked in italics.

c) she was not sure she would give the money to me

What I was interested in finding out was whether or not the students were able to understand the meaning of the metaphors used in these examples. Most examples were given an alternative with a literal interpretation. This was done to investigate the students' abilities to understand the extensional definitions, in other words the metaphors.

### **3.3 The sample**

As outlined by Robson, a sample is a selection from a population. The population of interest can be quite small, as in my case, a group of students at Vg 1. The sample is the composition of people in a survey. Borg and Gall (1999) and Mertens (2005) "suggest "rule of thumb" figures of about 15 observations per group for experimental, quasi-experimental and non-experimental designs involving group comparisons and about 30 observations for non-experimental designs involving relations in a single group. In survey research, which typically seeks to incorporate more variables than experimental and other non-experimental designs, they recommend somewhat larger numbers" (Robson 2011: 128). Hence, I selected two classes of 29 students, 58 in all.

Homogeneity of the population is also crucial when the main focus is to generalize the findings to the population from which the sample is drawn. "The more accurate you want the estimates from your study to be, the larger sample is needed" (Robson 2011: 128).

Homogeneity in my test was achieved through choosing students in the same five-hour English course, having approximately the same age (between 16 and 18). However, due to the fact that I also wanted to compare the comprehension of metaphorical expressions between students with Norwegian as their mother tongue (majority students) and students with Norwegian as their second language (minority students) I had a sort of a disproportionate sampling, where there was an unequal weighting of the two groups. Out of 58 students there were 22 minority students; about 37.9%. The fact that the sampling was disproportionate was something I was aware of before I conducted the test, because there are many students with Norwegian as their second language in our school. However, I was a bit surprised by the large number of minority students, since the two classes in the test were randomly chosen among the six we have at our school.

Of two major approaches to sampling used in this type of research; probability sampling and non-probability sampling, I used non-probability sampling. This means that the respondents were chosen by me as representatives for my study. Probability sampling, on the other hand, would allow all persons in the population being representatives in the sample. For me, it was most convenient to use non-probability sampling because the sample was easily accessible and I wanted to include only students from Vg1. The drawback by doing this is, of course, that the sample is from one geographical area and hence they are not representatives of the nation as a whole. The 58 students were selected as representatives of the population of students studying the five-hour English course in the Norwegian Vg1 program.

The 2 classes represented were from Vg1 studieforberedende (general education program). My aim was that 58 would be an adequate number of students to work with in my thesis, and that would be sufficient enough to provide me with interesting findings, findings that might confirm or invalidate my impressions about the level of the language in *Targets*. I had, however, to invalidate one of the tests, because one student had failed to answer all the tasks. This test was from a student in the majority group. Consequently, the total number of respondents for my research is 57.

The final division among the two groups was 35 majority students (62.4 %) and 22 minority students (38.6%). Currently, the municipality where I live consists of about 18.5% immigrants (<http://www.imdi.no>). Hence, I thought it would be interesting to have a fairly similar distribution of Norwegian students and students with a minority background within my own research group as we have in our municipality. However, in my school there are students from many different municipalities and the number of students with a minority background within these two classes was higher all together. In Norway today, there are about 12% immigrants and 2% Norwegian born people with immigrant parents (<http://www.ssb.no/innvandring-og-innvandrere>). This means that in my research, the number of immigrants or students with immigrant parents is fairly high.

There was a quite even distribution between boys and girls; 30 girls and 27 boys. I decided not to compare the results in the two classes, but rather treat them as one group since they all belong to the same five-hour English course and come from different lower secondary schools and municipalities. When discussing the results, the disproportionate number of majority and minority students needs to be taken into thorough consideration. However, at the moment

these students constitute the natural composition within this exact group, with a mix of students from Norway and a lot of different countries.

The distribution of majority boys and minority boys was fairly even, 14 in the former and 13 in the latter. The situation within the girls' group was quite different. The division is disproportionate, and the number of majority girls was more than double the number of minority girls, the number being 21 against 9. It is important to comment on the fact that a sample of only 9 is, of course, a low number to draw any major conclusions from.

All 22 minority students speak another language in addition to Norwegian at home. The languages represented in the test are:

- |              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| - Turkish    | - Dutch     |
| - Albanian   | - Bosnian   |
| - Vietnamese | - Polish    |
| - Chinese    | - Estonian  |
| - Arabic     | - Somali    |
| - Serbian    | - Filipino  |
| - Kurdish    | - Hungarian |
| - Thai       | - Czech     |
| - Lithuanian |             |

Due to the relative low number of participants in my research, the minority languages represented will be treated as one group. Since this is only a master's thesis, any details concerning the different languages spoken by the minority students and their score and choice of alternatives will not be discussed.

12 of the minority students were not born in Norway. This is significant as this is more than half of the minority students represented in the test. What is even more important is the fact that 8 of the 9 girls were born outside Norway. Still, the majority of the girls started learning English between the age of 6 and 8. Only one girl was in her teens, in this case 14.



**Table 1: Distribution of number of students, gender and mother tongue**

Students	Number	Percentage
Students in total	57	100%
Girls in total	30	52.6%
Boys in total	27	47.4%
Minority students in total	22	38.6%
Majority girls	21	70%
Minority girls	9	30%
Majority boys	14	51.9%
Minority boys	13	48.1%

### **3.4 The test**

The first page of the test was an instruction form in Norwegian telling the students how to answer the test, including an example. I chose to write the instruction form in Norwegian to make sure everybody understood how to perform the task (cf. appendix 1, p. 91).

As mentioned before, the test itself contained 40 tasks, each with three possible answers. Among the 40 tasks the three categories distracters, core items 1 and core items 2 were randomly distributed. However, two distracters were placed as task 1 and 2 in order to give the students the feeling of success at the beginning of the test (see appendix 2, p.92). By this, I mean that the two first tasks were quite straightforward as they contained no hidden meanings. Motivation is a key element when they have to answer such a large number of questions, especially to young people, and by introducing the test through “easy” tasks motivation might increase, as opposed to the opposite experience.

Gibbs (2008) underlines that in studies of metaphorical comprehension it is important to be aware of influencing factors. When studying the comprehension of metaphorical expressions the variables can be classified according to three main categories (Low 2010:40)

- 1. Different elicitation methods used including different types of response.*
- 2. Different ages and backgrounds of the individuals*
- 3. Different types of metaphorical expressions used*

These three categories are included in my research as well. The first one dealing with how the metaphorical expressions are presented to the students, for example the context and what kind of answer they are supposed to give. The second variable is related to age and background. Students usually have different experiences and their knowledge schemata might be different. Cultural differences might also influence the result (Littlemore and Low 2006). The third variable deals with the different types of metaphorical expressions used in the test.

At the end of the test there was a form in Norwegian, asking the students to state the following:

- Their age
- Their sex
- Their mother tongue
- Which language they speak at home
- Which language their parents speak as their mother tongue
- Whether or not they were born and raised in Norway
- If not, how old they were when they came to live in Norway
- How old they were when they started learning English
- What they think about the language/vocabulary in the textbook *Targets* (whether they find it too easy, easy, adequate, difficult or too difficult)
- In addition they were asked, if they wanted to, to comment on the test

This form was deliberately placed as the final page to put focus on the test itself right from the start. As it turned out, not all of these questions were equally important in the analysis and discussion of the results of the test. Some of them will only be briefly commented upon when necessary. The main factors in the discussion will be gender, whether they have Norwegian as their mother tongue or not, when they started learning English and their assessment of *Targets*.

### **3.4.1 Tasks in the test**

As briefly mentioned, the 40 sentences were placed in the three categories distracters, C1 items and C2 items. They were randomly placed and given the numbers 1-40 with three alternatives to choose between. There were 8 distracters, 15 core items 1 and 17 core items 2. The metaphorical expressions, core items 1 and 2, however, form the basis for my research and the results I got.

### 3.5 Conducting the test

Both classes were given the test during a double lesson of English. I was present in both classes throughout the conduction of the test. All the instructions concerning the test were given in Norwegian in order to make sure that they all understood what they were told. First of all, I emphasized the importance of taking the test seriously. I told them that this was something really important to me, and that this was something that I was genuinely interested in. In addition, I told them that it was important to them and students in general as well, because my work was part of analyzing their textbook and the level of it. I did not tell them the main theme of my research (metaphorical expressions), only that they were all sentences from the textbook and that I wanted to find out if they knew the meaning of them. In other words, what was being tested was their comprehension of some of the sentences in the textbook.

Furthermore, they were asked to read all the alternatives thoroughly before they ticked off their answer; a, b or c. They did not have a set time limit (except to try and finish within their English lesson), and they were asked to silently place the test on the teacher's desk and leave the classroom when they were done. I also underlined the fact that it was important to answer all the tasks to make their test valid. I read the front page out loud and asked if they had any questions. No questions were asked.

How much time they spent executing the test varied from about 15 minutes up until 40 minutes. As mentioned above, the final number of valid tests was 57.

To sum up, I decided to conduct a multiple choice test among Vg1 students in the general education program containing 40 sentences from their textbook *Targets*. The test contained both ordinary lexical expressions and metaphorical expressions. The sample consisted of two classes, 57 students all together. Moreover, both majority and minority students were represented.

In the following chapter, the findings of the test will be presented and analyzed.

## 4.0 Results and analysis

In this chapter the findings of my multiple choice test will be presented. The main focus will be placed upon the results within the two main categories of metaphorical expressions tested, those containing core items 1 as opposed to those containing core items 2. Moreover, the students' assessment of the textbook will be compared to their score on the test. In this section of the thesis, the findings will only be briefly commented upon, and then further discussed and analyzed in chapter 5.

### 4.1 Distracters

The distracters will only be briefly discussed in this section. A total of 8 sentences without metaphorical expressions were added to normalize the test, in other words to have a natural mix of straightforward sentences and sentences containing metaphorical expressions. They were all taken from the textbook and thus fair representatives of the language in it. In addition, as previously mentioned, it was important not to only have sentences containing metaphorical expressions in order not to reveal the theme of the test, and thereby having the possibility of getting invalid answers.

The distracters contained lexical and phonetic challenges like *orphanage*, *tend to* and *prepared* and *dare*. The word *orphanage* in task 36 would be a part of vocabulary testing (lexical challenge), whereas the word *dare* would be an orthographic (as well as phonologic), test when compared to for example the word *dear*. Among the multiple choice answers I often put in the opposite meaning to test basic comprehension. Some sentences were picked due to what I thought would be easy, recognizable vocabulary to create motivation by giving the students a feeling of recognition. Motivation plays an important role in cognitive and metacognitive strategy use (Garner 1987).

**Table 2: Results distracters**

<b>Students</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
All 57 students	390 (of 456)	85.5%
Majority students 35	248 (of 280)	88.6%
Minority students 22	142 (of 176)	80.7%
Girls in total 30	208 (of 240)	88.6%
Boys in total 27	183 (of 216)	84.7%
Majority girls 21	147 (of 168)	87.5%
Minority girls 9	61 (of 72)	84.7%
Majority boys 14	102 (of 112)	91.1%
Minority boys 13	81 (of 104)	77.9%

As expected the total score of the distracters was higher than the total score of the comprehension of the metaphorical expressions. These distracters did not contain metaphorical expressions and hence they were supposed to be easier to comprehend. Based on the results, this also seems to be the case. Nevertheless, I had expected the score to be even higher based on the examples used, since they were rather straightforward. There is an interesting discrepancy between the majority boys and the minority boys. The difference of 13.2% implies that vocabulary and language in general, not only language containing metaphorical expressions, are challenging for many of the minority boys. The high score of 91.1% among the boys with Norwegian as their mother tongue is closer to what I expected, but for the group as a whole. There is only a minor difference in score between the majority and minority girls. However, they both had a higher score than the minority boys.

#### **4.2. Metaphorical expressions in general**

First of all, it is important to display the overall score among the respondents, which means the score of both core item 1 and core item 2 expressions. It is noteworthy that the results of the test varied from the lowest score of 37.5% to the highest of 97.5%, all 40 tasks included.

**Table 3: Results metaphorical expressions**

<b>Students</b>	<b>Score metaphorical expressions in total (C1 and C2)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
All 57 students	1442 (of 1824)	79.1%
Majority students 35	939 (of 1120)	83.8%
Minority students 22	538 (of 704)	76.4%
Girls in total 30	787 (of 960)	82.0%
Boys in total 27	664 (of 864)	76.9%
Majority girls 21	553 (of 672)	82.3%
Minority girls 9	222 (of 288)	77.1%
Majority boys 14	384 (of 448)	85.7%
Minority boys 13	280 (of 416)	67.3%

Based on impressions during teaching English as a foreign language, namely the assumed advanced level of the language in the textbook *Targets* and the absence of metaphorical expressions in students' writings, the overall result of 79.1% was as expected. About 1/5 or 20% of the answers in the tasks that contained metaphorical expressions were wrong. However, it is important to pinpoint the fact that six of the students scored 50% or less and hence the overall result was affected.

That there might be a difference between majority students and minority students was also as expected. The difference is not that significant when both boys and girls in both groups are included, as it is only 7.4%. However, the fact that the minority boys only scored 67.3% in total is striking. There is a difference of 18.4% between the majority boys and the minority boys. This is of great interest, especially since only four of the minority boys were born outside Norway, and arrived here at the ages of 8, 12, 13 and 15 respectively. In addition, among these four, two of them started learning English at the age of 10, whereas the other two were 4 and 7. This means that out of the minority 13 boys, only two started learning English later than the rest of the boys, including the majority boys. Another aspect worth mentioning is that four of the boys in the minority group scored 50 % or less on the test, which affects the overall results for this group. Only one of these with a total score of 50% or less was among the four male students who were born outside Norway. This implies that minority boys, in

general, struggle more with their comprehension of metaphorical expressions than their Norwegian peers.

It is essential to scrutinize the results of the score of tasks containing C1 items versus the results of the score of tasks containing C2 items. The results will be presented in table 4 and 5, respectively.

### 4.3 Core items 1

Core items 1 are metaphorical expressions with no Norwegian equivalent. Whether or not they have equivalents in the minority languages represented, I would not know. Many of the examples in this category contain phrasal verbs which are common in the English language (cf. section 2.4).

**Table 4: Results C1 items**

<b>Students</b>	<b>Score C1 15 items</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
All 57 students	706 (of 855)	82.6%
Majority students 35	452 (of 525)	86.1%
Minority students 22	255 (of 330)	77.3%
Girls in total 30	371 (of 450)	82.4%
Boys in total 27	333 (of 405)	82.2%
Majority girls 21	263 (of 315)	83.5%
Minority girls 9	108 (of 135)	80.0%
Majority boys 14	187 (of 210)	89.0%
Minority boys 13	146 (of 195)	74.9%

The total score on C1 items, in other words those with no Norwegian equivalent when it comes to direct translation, is 82.6%. As expected based on the overall score presented in table 3 above, this is almost 1/5 of the C1 tasks. There is a major difference between the overall score between the majority students and the minority students. There is a deviation of 8.8 percentage points between the two groups. The relatively low number of participants in the test considered this is an interesting, but really not surprising result. The score among participants in the majority group is quite high (86.1%). The score among the participants in

the minority group is significantly lower (77.3%). C1 items with no Norwegian equivalents are interestingly enough harder to grasp for those who have a different mother tongue than Norwegian. It is, as in the overall score in table in table 3, noteworthy that the minority boys scored lower (74.9%) than all the other groups, and considerably less than the majority boys (89.0%), the difference between them being 14.1%.

#### 4.4 Core 2 items

Core 2 items are metaphorical expressions with a Norwegian equivalent. Many of them are directly translatable, others have similar wording in Norwegian. Core items 2 were the largest group represented in the test, with 17 examples.

**Table 5: Results C2 items**

<b>Students</b>	<b>Score C2 17 items</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
All 57 students	736 (of 969)	76.0%
Majority students 35	487 (of 595)	81.8%
Minority students 22	249 (of 374)	66.6%
Girls in total 30	416 (of 510)	81.2%
Boys in total 27	331 (of 459)	72.1%
Majority girls 21	290 (of 357)	81.2%
Minority girls 9	114 (of 153)	74.5%
Majority boys 14	197 (of 238)	82.8%
Minority boys 13	134 (of 221)	60.6%

Without a doubt, this is the most interesting table in my thesis. The C2 items generate the biggest challenge for the students, especially for the minority students. The average score among them is as low as 66.6%. This is not surprising at all. C2 items in the test have a Norwegian equivalent and since their mother tongue is something else than Norwegian, it is assumed that they do not have the same frame of reference as the students who only communicate in Norwegian at home. What is surprising is the rather low score also among the majority students. Having a score of only 81.6% on this type of metaphorical expressions was not as expected. Does this indicate that metaphorical expressions are complicated also for this group in Norwegian?



The most crucial score is the low score of 60.6% among the minority boys. The C2 category is definitely the most difficult one to comprehend, at least according to this test, the examples chosen and the sample in my group. The total average 8 score on C1 items was 82.6%, whereas the total average score on C2 items was 76%. Within both groups the minority boys had the lowest score, as opposed to the majority boys who had the highest (82.8%). This constitutes the biggest difference in the test, with a divergence of 22.2%. The minority girls also scored considerably less than their peers, especially on C2 items. C2 items seem to constitute the biggest challenge for students with a minority background.

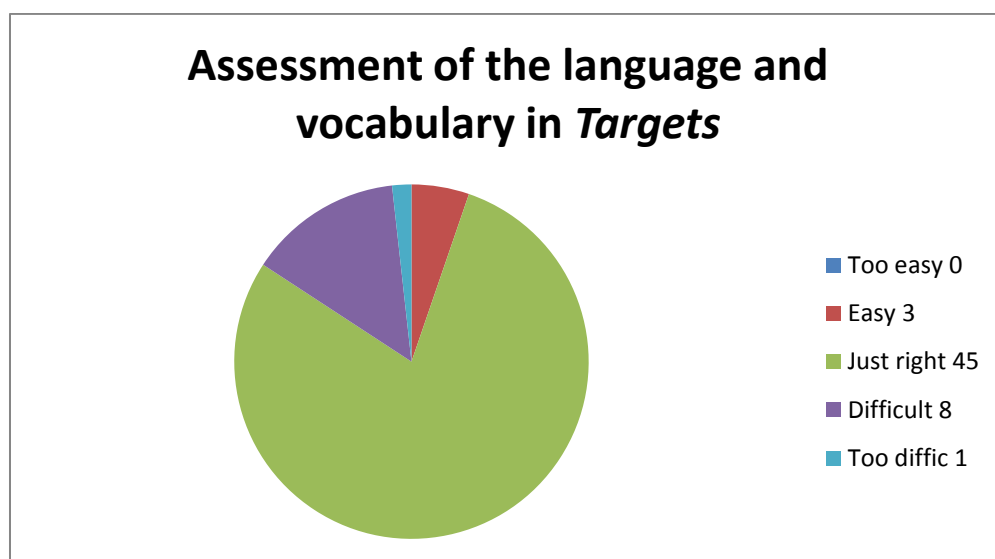
#### **4.5 Students' evaluation of *Targets***

In the form at the end of the test the students were also asked to state their opinion about the language and vocabulary in the textbook *Targets*. In order to classify the answers more easily, they were given 5 alternatives (in Norwegian):

- too easy (for lett)
- easy (lett)
- just right (passe)
- difficult (vanskelig)
- too difficult (for vanskelig)

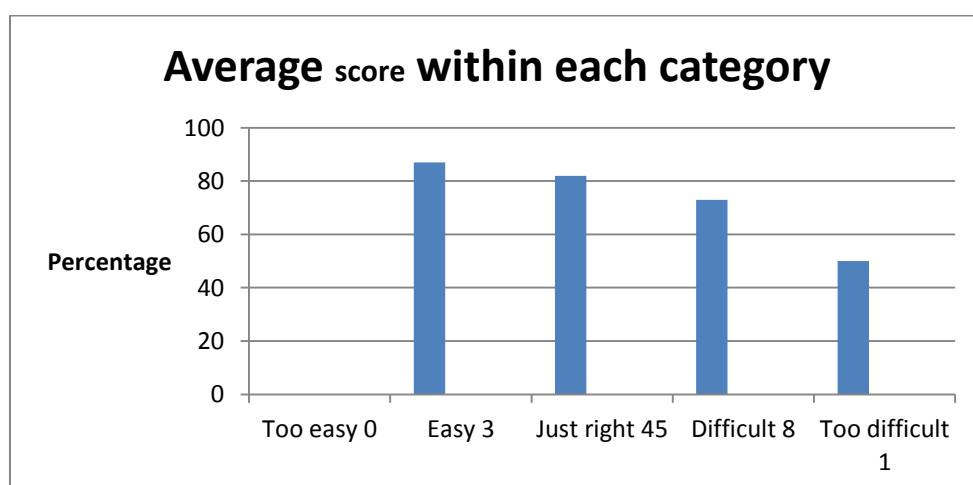
The majority of the students considered the textbook just right (45 students or 78.9%). Only one student considered it too difficult (about 2.0%). Eight students found the language difficult (14%), something which also manifests itself in their results on the test (see figure 1) 3 students (5.3%) considered it easy. However, none of the students found it too easy (0.0%). In sum, according to most of the students in this group the textbook is suitable for their level of English and the five-hour course they have in Vg1.

**Figure 2: Students' assessment of the language and vocabulary in *Targets***



However, the scores on their tests imply something else when we compare these scores to their assessment of the language and vocabulary in the book, especially among the largest group; they who found the textbook just right. In the displaying below the overall scores on the tests are included since all 40 tasks test comprehension of sentences in *Targets*, and are representatives of the language in the book. It portrays the average scores on the test in of each of the five categories, or actually 4 since no one found it too easy. Based on the assessment one might expect a high score on the test among those who found it easy or just right, whereas among those who found it difficult or too easy one might expect the opposite.

**Diagram 1: Students' results versus students' assessment of *Targets***



Do the scores correlate to their assessment of the textbook? First and foremost, it is interesting that the average scores on the test match their assessment of the language and vocabulary in

*Targets*. There is obviously little discrepancy between the assessment of the textbook and the scores they received. Those students who found the language and vocabulary too easy had the highest average score, whereas those students who found it difficult or too difficult had the lowest score. Their self-knowledge in this is quite good.

However, the relatively low score of about 82% among those who found the textbook just right implies the fact the language and vocabulary may be difficult after all. To have a fault rate of almost 20% might suggest that there is quite a lot they do not comprehend.

Nevertheless, it is significant that among the 45 who found the textbook just right, 18 had a score between 90% and 97.5%. This means that 40% of these students hit the bulls' eye in assessing their own level of English compared to the language in *Targets*. The same goes for the nine students who ticked off difficult and too difficult, the lowest score being 37.5%.

In the next chapter the findings will be discussed and linked to theory on metaphors where relevant.

## 5.0 Discussion

This chapter lays out the findings in the test. The overall results, as well as the most significant scores on the individual tasks, will be discussed in terms of the theory presented in chapter 2. First, the distribution of gender and origin will be commented upon. Then the distracters, C1 items and C2 items will be discussed. Finally, the overall result will be discussed in the light of the most interesting findings.

### 5.1 Distribution of gender and origin

First and foremost, it is necessary to comment on the fact that in Norway there is a majority of girls attending the general education program. However, the difference is not that significant as the division among boys and girls through the last years has been about 55% girls and 45% boys (<http://www.regjeringen.no>). This is also portrayed in the selection of students in this research. As shown in table 1 there is a fairly even distribution between the two; 52.6% girls and 47.4% boys.

However, the interesting element concerning the sample in my thesis is the distribution of majority and minority students. In my research there are 38.6% minority students. This is not representative of the distribution of immigrants or persons with immigrant background in Norway in general. As mentioned in section 3.3, the total number of immigrants or people born in Norway, but with immigrant parents, sums up to about 14%. In the municipality where this research is conducted, there are about 18.5% immigrants. This is the 9<sup>th</sup> highest percentage in Norway in proportion to population. Hence, in this research the number of minority students is significantly high. Thus, the distribution of majority students and minority students in this research is not valid according to the distribution in Norway in general. It has, however, been important in my research as this distribution has clearly led to some interesting facts about understanding metaphorical expressions based on the students' language background. In Anne Golden's (2005) study the percentage of minority students was 40 (Low 2010), and this led to some very interesting findings as to what extent minority students struggle with the comprehension of metaphorical expressions. Hence, I consider it useful in my study that I had a relatively high number of minority students. Moreover, the division of majority and minority students represents the real-life composition of the students in two of the Vg1 classes on my school.

## 5.2 Distracters

As in Anne Golden's (2005) study, there was a difference in understanding items with a literal meaning (distracters in my study) as opposed to understanding metaphorical expressions. The average score on the items with a literal meaning in Golden's (2005) study was almost 97% among the majority students and 85.6% among the minority students. The numbers in my study, accordingly, were 88.6% and 80.7%. I only had 8 distracters in the test, and that may be one of the reasons why the scores were lower among my group of participants. It shows, however, that both the majority and the minority group are quite familiar with the vocabulary in these examples. Nevertheless, among the distracters there was one which many students did not understand. Only 64.9% answered this one correctly:

27. *Mother said she did not have the money and even if she did have, she was not prepared to give it to me*

means

- a) she was not ready to give the money to me
- b) she was happy to give the money to me
- c) she was not sure she would give the money to me

In the distracters the intention was to test students' comprehension of vocabulary and meaning based on the structure of the sentence, and not metaphorical expressions. Out of the 20 wrong answers on this one, most students chose alternative *c* (19 of 20). This shows that *prepare* is a word that many students do not know the meaning of. In addition, in the alternative I made, the meaning of *was not prepared* might be apprehended as quite similar to *was not sure*, both having to do with a sense of uncertainty. Moreover, the number of mistakes on this specific task was unevenly distributed among majority students and minority students. The difference in fault rate between the two groups is significant; 41% of the minority students chose alternative *c*, as opposed to 28.6% among the majority students. It is interesting that close to half of the minority students chose the wrong answer. The minority students in particular seem to struggle with the term *prepare*. On this particular task, a justification of their choice of alternative *c* would have been informative in order to understand why they perceived the meaning as *not sure*. Unfortunately, a multiple choice test will not reveal the reason behind their choices. To sum up, the result is clearly a sign that *prepare* is not a part of many of the students' vocabulary, or that they do not know the basic meaning of it.

Moreover, task 14 obviously posed a challenge in the distracter group:

14. *The dead dogs had been fed to the other dogs to keep them alive*

means

- a) somebody had given the other dogs dead dogs to eat
- b) some people had to eat the dead dogs to survive
- c) the other dogs died because they were given the dead dogs to eat

15 students all together chose an incorrect alternative on this task. 25.7% of the majority students and 27.3% of the minority students. Of the 15 incorrect answers, 10 were alternative *b)* and 5 were alternative *c)*. In my opinion this is a rather straightforward sentence when it comes to meaning. In other words, the linguistic meaning of the sentence is quite clear.

However, the example includes two groups of dogs, and how they relate to each other in the sentence might require extra processing. As the vocabulary in this sentence is rather simple, it means that something else complicates the meaning of the sentence as a whole. I suspect that the structure of the sentence contributes to complicating it. As 10 students picked alternative *b)*, I reflect upon whether or not there have been uncertainties concerning the determiner *them*, and if it points to *the other dogs* or something else.

On the other hand, *source* is a word students are familiar with, as task 2 only had one wrong answer:

2. *Can your textbooks be useful sources?*

means

- a) Are your textbooks unimportant?
- b) Do your textbooks list their sources?
- c) Can your textbook help you find important information?

The whole test considered this task was the one most students answered correctly. The word *source* is obviously a part of most of these students' vocabulary. The student who had ticked off an incorrect answer was a minority student, and the alternative chosen was *a)*, actually stating the opposite meaning. The word *source* also has existential definitions, but they will not be discussed here, as *source* is used in its literal sense in task 2. As a language teacher, I can vouch for the fact that the word *source* is a word that is repeatedly mentioned and discussed in class, especially in assessment situations. They are constantly reminded of the importance to list their sources. Hence, it ought to be a familiar word at the level of Vg1. Moreover, the context in this example facilitates the decoding of *source*, as it is placed together with words such as *textbooks* and *useful*.

Again, it is important to pinpoint the fact that overall, the majority boys had a high score of 91.1%, whereas the minority boys only had 77.9%. This constitutes a discrepancy of 13.2%, which is interesting. This indicates that there is a difference in the vocabulary of these two groups. Both the majority and minority girls scored higher than the minority boys, and received quite similar results as with the distracters, 87.5% and 84.7% respectively. In sum, the minority boys once again fall short to their Norwegian peers. Having a fault rate close to ¼ of the tasks in the distracter group, the minority boys seem to struggle with basic vocabulary. However, when we compare the differences in score between the majority students and the minority students, the differences are not statistically significant ( $p < 0.17$ ).

First and foremost, the reality is that all the minority students have English as an L3. They are still young and in the process of learning and developing their language abilities. It is not easy to know to what extent speaking three languages affect this learning process. One must assume that it is difficult to understand and produce all three languages equally fluent. Moreover, some of the minority students did not learn Norwegian from their early years. Other reasons, such as the tendency for minority girls to apply for the general education program as opposed to minority boys, will be included in the general discussion (cf. section 5.5).

### **5.3 C1 items**

The C1 items do not have a Norwegian equivalent. Hence, before conducting the test I suspected that this group of metaphorical expressions would be the most difficult ones to understand and thus have the lowest correct score. This, however, did not turn out to be the case. Interestingly enough, the scores in all the different groups were higher than the C2 scores, where there are Norwegian equivalents. I suspected that C2 items would be easier to recognize because of L1 transfer (at least for the majority of the students). Naturally, this is closely linked to variables, like the examples chosen, as well as the multiple choice answers given in the test. There are many possible explanations to why the students failed to understand some of these expressions. One of them might be lack of schemata, and that the target domain is new. The students might not grasp the personality trait in question when dealing with metaphors. According to Gibbs (2008) they need to be familiar with the source domain, and at least recognize the target domain.

The overall score of C1 items was 82.6%, which is 2.9% lower than the score of the distracters. This difference is not very significant. Again however, there is a significant

difference between the majority students and minority students, 86.1% among the former, as opposed to 77.3% among the latter; a difference of 8.8% in total. It is noteworthy that within the C1 score the overall score between girls and boys is almost exactly the same; 82.4% among the girls and 82.2% among the boys. Here, the overall comprehension of C1 items does not seem gender biased. However, when we then compare the girls and boys according to their mother tongue the numbers are quite different. Between majority and minority girls, the majority girls had a slightly higher score than the minority group, 83.5% versus 80.0%. Based on these results, C1 items seem to be equally challenging to both majority and minority girls. The majority boys had the best score of 89.0%. Once more, the minority boys had the lowest score; 74.9%. The difference of 14.1% among the boys is very interesting. In order to explain the default rate, the most significant results on the C1 items in the test will be discussed.

Out of the 15 C1 items, task 17 received the lowest score. There were 21 wrong answers, 11 among the majority students and 10 among the minority students, the percentage of wrong answers among the majority students then being 31.4% and 50% among the minority students respectively.

17. *What do you think led to this change of heart?*

means

- a) What do you think made them change their opinion?
- b) What do you think led to this heart transplant?
- c) What do you think suddenly made them love each other?

I chose to make one alternative literal (*b*) and one involving *love* because *heart* and *love* often collocate (*c*). Furthermore, the word *suddenly* in *c* indicates a change of state and hence the meaning of *c* may seem more similar to the sentence tested (cf *a*). 20 students chose alternative *c*), only one (a minority student) chose alternative *b*). Since none of the students were asked to state the reasons for choosing the different alternatives, one could assume that such a large number of the students chose *c*) because *heart* and *love* often collocate: If you change your heart, then you might love someone. *Love* is a topic most students are familiar with (Gibbs 2008). They may have interpreted *suddenly love each other* as a change of opinion as well. It seems like my choice of words in *c*), might have been a variable in task 17 which led to such a high percentage of wrong answers (36.8%). It is interesting that half of the minority students interpreted *change of heart* incorrectly. In my opinion, the source domain



for *change of heart* is MEANINGS ARE OBJECTS (Kövecses 2002), where *heart* is the object and the *change of heart* implies a change of opinion. *Heart* as it is used in this expression is the container of MEANING. This seems unfamiliar to many students. When the source domain is unfamiliar, the target domain is not easy to comprehend (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). The target domain, on the contrary, seems familiar to many of the students based on their choice of alternative *c*).

Furthermore, *change of heart* is a genitive. However, it is not a physical change, but a mental change. Hence, heart is used metaphorically. This sentence then triggers a reinterpretation. One needs to go from a physical to an abstract meaning. The literal alternative *b*) was obviously discharged by most students as a correct alternative in this task; to change the heart physically was not what this was about.

Another C1 item that needs to be discussed is task 21. There were 16 wrong answers, seven from majority students (20%) and nine from minority students (40.9%). More than half of the minority girls chose *c*) as their answer. Five students all together chose the physical interpretation of *break out*, in other words alternative *b*).

21. *The thought of these intimacies in particular filled her with dread and made her break out in sweat*

means

- a) that these thoughts made her start sweating
- b) that these thoughts made her run away from prison
- c) that these thoughts made her end the relationship

The noun *sweat* might be a word not usually associated with *break out*. The formulation *made her break out in sweat* indicates that she is doing something physical with her body. As a phrasal verb, together with *out*, the meaning still points to something physical here, but it adds a dimension of a hindrance that needs to be passed, like *to break out of prison* or in this example *sweat breaking out through the skin*. It is used intransitively. Even if the wording is *made her break out in sweat*, it is sweat that physically breaks through the skin and has in a sense been personified. A suitable source domain could be INANIMATE OBJECTS ARE PEOPLE (Kövecses 2002). Hence, *sweat* as an inanimate object is given human qualities and *breaks out* like a person would break out from prison. Again, the source domain seems to be unfamiliar and poses difficulties in terms of finding the appropriate link to the target domain.

Another reason for choosing alternative *c* might be that the students associate this with a more well-known expression, such as *break up a relationship*. In the literal interpretation of *break*, the encoded, lexical meaning denotes *bryte (av)*, *brekke* or *ødelegge* in Norwegian. Moreover, the context within which the metaphorical expression is presented might also lead to students' choice of *c*), because of the word *intimacies* in the beginning of the sentence, which is often related to a word like *relationship*; How rich the context is as an important variable in a test like this (Gibbs 2008). There is a similar physical expression in English and Norwegian where we say *to break out in laughter* or *bryte ut i latter*. Based on the number of incorrect answers, many students have not seen the parallels between the two physical versions of *break out*, which makes *break out* rather transparent.

Task 34 is the last among the C1 items to be discussed according its high percentage of incorrect answers. 28.6% of the majority students and 22.7% of the minority students failed to find the correct answer.

34. *He could make a dash for it down the hall*

means

- a) that he could try to run down the hall
- b) that he could walk slowly down the hall
- c) that he could throw some water down the hall

*Make a dash for* is an idiomatic expression. As an individual word, *dash* carries multiple meanings, some of them being *raskt fremstøt*, *sprint* or *dråpe*, *skvett* in Norwegian (<http://www.ordnett.no>). Multiple meaning words naturally pose difficulties for foreign language learners, as the learners need to learn the different connotations that these words have. When you learn a language it is not given that you will actually come across more than one or two of the meanings multiple meaning words carry. Thus, it is not given that context will facilitate the interpretation if you come across a new sense of the word. If we look at the individual words in this expression, the meaning of it as a whole is actually quite transparent, as *dash* is used in one of its literal senses; *raskt fremstøt*. Together with *make*, *a dash for* needs to be differently interpreted to get at the intended meaning. As an expression it contains the literal meaning *gjøre et fremstøt*, *en sprint*, but because of *make* also implies that the outcome of this *dash* is a bit uncertain: He is going to try run down the hall. Whether he is going to succeed or not, is uncertain. It is an imageable metaphor, and conventional as such, and due to this the interpretation is assumed to happen with a minimum of effort, at least

among native speakers of English (Sperber and Wilson 1986 in Goatly 1997). I suspect, however, that the meaning of *dash* in task 34 is unknown to many students. They do not know the meaning of it. They lack the schemata to find the appropriate connotations in the interpretation process (Littlemore 2004).

Alternative *b*), which states the opposite of make a *dash for*, was selected by nine of the students. It is important to pinpoint that the students' choice of *b*) might indicate that they understand that the meaning is related to motion, as opposed to *c*), which is *dash* in the sense of *dråpe, skvett*.

Task 4 received the highest correct score among the C1 items:

4. *When Edward has left, his father has no one to turn to but his diary*  
means
- a) that his father looks for his diary
  - b) that when Edward has left, his father turns around
  - c) that his father has no human being to talk to

There were only three incorrect answers altogether, one from a majority student (2.9%) and two from minority students (9.1%). They all chose alternative *a*), which is a physical interpretation in the sense of trying to find something and that bodily movements are usually required in the process. However, I should have been more careful as to not have placed phrasal verbs among the alternatives. This was my initial intention, to avoid metaphorical expressions in the alternatives. This proves to which extent phrasal verbs are a part of the English language, and hence easy to forget as something else than normal lexical words with a basic, literal meaning. They are internalized. However, the phrasal verb *turn to* was the metaphorical expression to be tested in this task. As mentioned in section 2.4, phrasal verbs often need to be interpreted as a whole, and not based on the meaning of the individual words in the expression. *Turn* in its literal sense means a change of movement, involving a twist of the body or a physical object. Together with the preposition *to*, *turn to* as a linguistic expression denotes the abstract meaning to *ask someone for help*. *Turn to* is a conventional metaphor, and as we can see based on the high score on this task, means that it is easier to comprehend for L2 learners (Kövecses 2002).

To sum up, C1 items did not generate the biggest challenge in test. However, a fault rate of 17.4% indicates that these types of metaphorical expressions need to be dealt with in class.

The difference between the majority students and the minority students on C1 items was not statistically significant ( $p < 0.12$ ). Clearly, they are perceived as incomprehensible by a number of students, especially minority boys. It turned out that the most difficult expressions to comprehend consisted of a phrasal verb (task 21) and idiomatic expressions (task 17 and 34). That these types of metaphorical expressions often are perceived as difficult to comprehend is supported by the theory presented in section 2.3 and 2.4. More reasons to explain the findings will be presented in section 5.5.

#### **5.4 C2 items**

As already mentioned, C2 items have Norwegian equivalents. These expressions are not always directly translatable, but share similar wording in English and Norwegian. However, as Falck (2012) points out, there may be a difference in how the same conceptual metaphor in two languages is linguistically instantiated (MacArthur 2012).

Some examples from the test:

- a cold fish – en kald fisk (task 5)
- to dump someone – å dumpe noen (task 11)
- a stroke of a genius – en genistrek (task 18)
- to keep one's eyes on – å holde øye med (task 25)
- to take the law into your own hands – å ta loven i egne hender (task 26)
- to teach somebody a lesson – å lære noen en lekse (task 35)
- armed to the teeth – væpnet til tennene (task 40)

All the listed examples above fit in to the category of metaphorical expressions in English which are directly translatable to Norwegian. Sharing similar wording like this should point to a high degree of transparency for EFL learners, and thus easier to process than, for example, C1 items.

There were 17 examples of C2 items in the test, hence the most common type of metaphorical expressions used. When selecting examples from *Targets*, the idea was to have a fairly even distribution between C1 and C2 items, in order to compare the students' comprehension of the two.

As described in section 4.4, the average score was quite low, 76.0%. Compared to C1 items this is 6.6% lower. Almost ¼ of the answers were incorrect. As previously mentioned, this result was surprising since these expressions are also found in the Norwegian language, and hence one would assume that most of these expressions are familiar to the majority of the students. However, the task which had the highest percentage of wrong answers in the test contained a C2 item. Four significant C2 items results will be presented and discussed in the section below.

Most importantly, based on the number of incorrect answers, task 40 constituted the biggest challenge for the students. This was the last task in the test. 33 of 57 students (57.9%) did not know the meaning of *armed to the teeth*. 21 (60%) of these were majority students, 12 (54.5%) minority.

40. *You came out of the Minnesota woodlands armed to the teeth*  
means

- a) that you came out of the Minnesota woodlands with a lot of experience
- b) that you came out of the Minnesota woodlands with a toothache
- c) that you came out of the Minnesota woodlands with weapons

The reason for the high percentage of incorrect answers on task 40 is probably related to several factors. First of all, this was the last task in the test. At this point, several students may have been eager to finish the test, and hence they did not read it thoroughly enough. In other words, they did not spend enough time processing it. Regarding processing, it is interesting that out of 33 wrong answers, 27 chose a), the first alternative. It seems like they picked the easiest accessible alternative. Moreover, alternative a) suggests that *armed to the teeth* means to have a lot of experience. The interpretations of 27 students imply that they have understood the notion of armed, meaning *supplied or provided with something*. Given the alternative *a lot of experience*, they have linked a lot of to *being supplied or provided with*. Hence, they found *a lot of experience* to be the most likely interpretation of *armed to the teeth*. This is not far from its modern sense, meaning *to be equipped for any potential circumstance* (<http://www.wisegeek.com>). The difference in meaning between the correct one; *to be prepared* (in advance,) and the similar alternative in a); *to have experience* (in the aftermath of something) is not very obvious. Hence, my alternative here may have been too similar to the actual meaning.

The context, *you came out of the Minnesota woodlands* (...) might also imply that something has happened and has led to a change, like in this example: given you some kind of experience. On the other hand, it is possible that the expression *the Minnesota woodlands* is something that students do not know much about or is insufficient in this context to help interpret the expression correctly. It is not a part of the students' schemata.

“Lakoff and Johnson claim that our primary metaphorical systems are grounded first and foremost in our direct physical and social experience. All basic sensorimotor concepts are literal” (Ritchie 2006:32). It is interesting then to look at the expression *armed to the teeth*: The expression dates back to the 1600s when pirates used guns to raid ships. At the time it took a long time to reload guns and because of this they carried several weapons with them, usually one in each hand and sometimes also in their pockets. In addition, they often placed a knife between their teeth. Hence, the expression *armed to the teeth*, means someone who was heavily armed and prepared for action. This expression, however, is not easy to link to Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory on conceptual metaphors, as it is a linguistic expression with an explicit physical explanation. This physical action described developed into an expression meaning carrying as many weapons as you can. *Armed to the teeth* definitely supports their claim that “metaphors exist as correlations between abstract concepts and embodied experience (...) that map abstract concepts on to direct physical experiences” (Ritchie 2006:32).

As *armed to the teeth* is a highly transparent idiom, I was really surprised that this was the task that received the highest number of incorrect answers. The fact that it is an imageable metaphor and a conventional one, did not prepare me for a fault rate of 57.9%. As portrayed above, we do have the corresponding expression *væpnet til tennene* in Norwegian. I feel that this idiom is internalized in the Norwegian language (as it is in English). However, I perceive many conventionalized metaphorical expressions and idioms as somewhat old-fashioned. They do not appear as often as before, neither in spoken or written language. Due to this, they are unfamiliar and hence incomprehensible to many young people. They do not possess the appropriate vocabulary. After I conducted this test in June last year, I have presented *armed to the teeth* in all my new English classes, also to older students in Vg 2 and 3. The results I got in these groups confirm that this is an expression many students do not know the meaning of.

Task 7 is a question from an exercise in *Targets*, and hence important in terms of students' comprehension of the tasks given in the textbook. From a teacher's perspective, being able to

understand the exercises in a learner's book is crucial. A lot of work in the classroom and at home is centered on exercises. If you fail to understand one or several metaphorical expressions in a short story, it is still possible to grasp the overall meaning and also interpret it. However, if this is the case with exercises, important information and learning may be lost.

7. *What label would you put on this story?*

means

- a) What piece of plastic or paper would you put on the story to give information about it?
- b) How would you classify the story?
- c) What title would you give the story?

26 students (45.6%) answered task 7 incorrectly, 14 majority students (40%) and 12 minority students (54.5%). Alternative *a*) points to the literal meaning of *label*. Surprisingly, 4 students chose this alternative. Maybe they pictured the story physically printed on paper, then being labeled. 22 students chose alternative *c*). Again, I had made an alternative with a similar meaning to the correct one. *To label something* might indicate to name something, hence a title. However, I suspected that by using the word *classify* in alternative *b*) they would realize that this meant describing the story in terms of literary placement. Furthermore, at this level, this is a common task when working with literature, and should be a part of their schemata.

The metaphorical expressions in both task 40 and 7 are clearly physical linguistic expressions. They are difficult to place in any conceptual metaphor according to the ones made by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). This may also be the reason why they have been difficult to answer correctly; they are not a part of our underlying conceptual system in the world of metaphors.

Task 22 also proved to be quite a challenge. As with task 7 and 40 the number of incorrect answers was fairly high. 22 of 57 (38.6%) answers were incorrect. In this task the minority students scored considerably less than their Norwegian peers, 14 out of 22 (63.6%).

22. *I'm sure that up until that minute he had been living in awe of anybody with a college education*

means

- a) that he had been living together with a college educated student
- b) that he hated people with a college education
- c) that he respected, but also feared, people with a college education

Metaphor comprehension, as previously mentioned, is closely linked to vocabulary comprehension. When encountering an unknown word in a metaphorical expression, it is very difficult to guess from context what this word means, and hence understand the metaphorical expression as a whole. Based on this particular example, I assume that the word *awe* is unfamiliar to many of the students. They do not know the meaning of it. Another interesting result is the high number of incorrect answers from the minority students. When we translate *awe* into Norwegian, namely *ærefrykt*, I suspect that is a word that is unfamiliar to many minority students. This might be the case for majority students as well. It is combined by *ære* and *frykt*, and what does it actually mean when they are connected? They seem quite the opposite when it comes to meaning. In this particular case, it seems like the misinterpretation may be related to linguistic constraints. The higher the frequency, the more likely a word is to be learned (Golden 2005). It may be hard to understand the meaning because of a lack of linguistic and cultural knowledge, either in their L1 or L2 (Cardosa and Vieris 2006).

Furthermore, in my opinion, *awe* is not a word commonly used by teenagers. It belongs to same category as *armed to the teeth* in task 40. Then, the word *awe* not being a part of their schemata, the whole expression is difficult to interpret and 13 (22.8%) chose the meaning *hate*, whereas nine (15.8%) chose the literal interpretation *to physically live with*. This linguistic expression (idiom) may have the conceptual metaphor MIND IS THE BODY, where BODY is the source domain. The *mind*, then, is “living” in *awe* of this person, not physically of course, but mentally. The mind represents the body. We try to understand the target domain MIND through the use of the source domain; here the BODY (Kövecses 2002). In this particular example, even though MIND IS THE BODY may be part of our conceptual system, the expression was hard to interpret correctly due to the meaning of the word *awe*.

Moreover, the choice of alternative *b*) by 13 students may also point to the use of broadening during their processing. As stated by Kolati and Wilson (2013), the word (here: *awe*) is used to convey a more general concept than the linguistically encoded literal meaning, and hence, in this example, broadened to *hate*.

There is one more C2 item that I feel the need to shed some light on. In task 3 we find the metaphorical expression *cold fish*. It has the exact same wording in Norwegian; *kald fisk*. This expression belongs to the category of idioms. As idioms have taken root in a language and cannot be changed in terms of wording, they are usually readily accessible and easy to understand for a native speaker. Hence, the number of mistakes on this particular task



astonished me. My perception is that *cold fish* is a familiar expression both in English and Norwegian. If you are considered *a cold fish*, you are a reserved person with little or no feelings.

3. *England is a nation full of the coldest fish in the world*

means

- a) that England has a lot of cold water fish
- b) that England is full of insensitive people
- c) that England is full of caring people

21 (36.8%) students chose an incorrect answer, 11 (31.4%) majority students and 10 (45.5%) minority students respectively. Six (10.5%) chose *c*), the opposite meaning, whereas 15 (26.3%) chose *a*), the literal meaning. Based on the number of literal interpretations, it seems as if an attempt of narrowing has been made, but only to a certain extent. According to relevance theory, narrowing is provoked by pragmatic factors (Kolati and Wilson 2012). This means that the context may have contributed to narrowing the meaning down to having to do with fish as England to a large extent is surrounded by (cold) water.

Again, as we have the exact same idiom in Norwegian, which implies the possibility of L1 transfer and high transparency, the number of incorrect answers is significant. The idiom *cold fish* is internalized in both the English and Norwegian language, and hence, as with *armed to the teeth*, is supposed to be easily recognizable. As the example contains simple, straightforward words, some students may have read the alternatives quite quickly, and hence processed it accordingly. The easiest would then be to choose the literal interpretation. However, we can link the linguistic expression *cold fish* the source domain PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS (Kövecses 2002:125). We often compare people to animals (cf. he is a lion section 2.1). Still, 26.3% of the students chose the literal interpretation. Their choice of a literal interpretation in this task is, in my opinion, not enough to claim that they are unfamiliar with the source domain PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS. In this particular idiom, I suspect that the target domain actually is the unfamiliar one. The students have not been able to map the target domain, *cold fish*, to the source domain, ANIMALS ARE PEOPLE.

In the test, the C2 item task with the least number of mistakes was task 15. Only two students picked an incorrect answer. These were minority students and they both chose alternative *a*), a physical interpretation.

15. *The Captain of the Titanic, Edward Smith, went down with his ship*

means

- a) that the Captain jumped off the Titanic when it sank
- b) that the Captain went down to the lower decks
- c) that the Captain drowned when the Titanic sank

Without a doubt, the story of Titanic is a story that most students in Norway are familiar with. Many of them have read stories about it, and/or have seen the movie and have the schemata necessary to understand what this is about. In addition, we have the same expression in Norwegian; *gå ned med*. Moreover, in this sentence, *ship* collocates with *went down*, which also helps students to process the meaning of the metaphorical expression. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claim that most concepts are grounded in bodily experiences and spatial orientation, in other words how we interact with the physical environment. These human spatial concepts include UP-DOWN orientation, IN-OUT orientation etc. They are referred to as orientational metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:16). The metaphorical expression *to go down with* in task 15 is linked to DOWN orientation and indicates to sink, meaning physically moving downwards (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Talking about UP-DOWN orientation, I would like to reflect upon the following suggestion, even though it might be somewhat controversial. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) conceptualize *bad* in terms of BAD IS DOWN. Hence, I claim that the linguistic expression *to go down with* is a metaphorical expression of BAD IS DOWN conceptual metaphor. As *to go down with* here means *to drown*, the notion of BAD IS DOWN is highly relevant.

The whole expression, including the preposition *with*, functions as a phrasal verb. Without the preposition *with*, only the literal meaning would be left. Furthermore, *to go down with* something indicates that two or more things/persons sink at the same time. Last, the sentence in task 15 consists of simple vocabulary, something which also facilitates the comprehension and processing of the metaphor.

I find the extent to which the majority students misinterpreted the C2 items extremely interesting. I would never have anticipated that metaphorical expressions with similar meaning and wording in both English and Norwegian would pose such difficulties among the majority students. As mentioned before, I hypothesized that the minority students, who may not have the same references or schemata as their Norwegian peers, would struggle more with

C2 items than C1 items. The opposite happened. The difference in score among the majority students and minority students is statistically significant  $p < 0.002$ .

Nacey (2010) claims that “L1 speakers tend to have a high degree of metaphorical competence, at least in regards to conventional (...) metaphors” (Nacey 2010:32). Some of the results in my test point to the opposite. Many students actually struggled to understand the meaning of conventional metaphors, such as *cold fish* and *armed to the teeth*. I have already suggested that some of the words used in several of the metaphorical expressions might be old-fashioned and/or unfamiliar. Golden (2005) supports this view, and emphasizes the need to reflect upon whether the vocabulary is likely to be known by the students, and whether it is appropriate for their age.

### **5.5 Metaphorical expressions in general**

As presented in table 3, there is an overall score of 79.1% of the metaphorical expressions. The number is not significantly lower than the score of the distracters (85.5%). However, there is a difference and this is especially visible when we compare majority students with minority students. There is a difference of 7.4% between the two groups, the majority students with 83.8% and the minority students with 76.4%. Both groups learn English in addition to their mother tongue. It is important to remember that minority students speak Norwegian (and maybe an L3 at school) in addition to their mother tongue and one needs to reflect upon how well they master the different languages they use in their everyday life. Because of this, the minority students' vocabulary and experiences may be smaller, and their knowledge schemata might be different (Gibbs 2008). I have reflected upon whether or not there could there be a difference between these two groups of students as to what extent they are exposed to English outside school? Through individual English subject conversations with students throughout the years, I have asked students where they receive English input outside school. Mostly, they answer through music, TV and the Internet, or sometimes books. Minority students often say that they also watch TV programs in their mother tongue via satellite. Consequently, they might be less exposed to English than majority students.

The overall result of C1 and C2 items and the low score among minority boys, in particular, indicate that metaphorical expressions are difficult to comprehend. Among the incorrect answers, the physical/literal interpretation and sentences conveying similar meanings as the introductory sentence were the most likely ones to be ticked off. This tendency is the same as in Anne Golden's (2005) study and points to a lack of metaphoric competence among many

EFL students. Many students struggle to infer meaning beyond the literal meaning of metaphorical expressions. Does this indicate that the language situation of the minority groups is serious?

This lack of metaphorical comprehension can be linked to several variables. First of all, the students' vocabulary is crucial in terms of their ability to recognize and comprehend the individual words in the expression. If they fail to comprehend the meaning of the individual words, the interpretation of the expression as a whole will become difficult. Inference presupposes comprehension. Moreover as pointed out in section 2.5, "the understanding of a metaphor includes an interaction of the source and target domains. The source domain of the metaphors must thus be familiar, and the target domain must be if not familiar, then at least recognizable" (Golden 2005:41). One has to consider if the vocabulary is appropriate for this age group, and whether or not it is relevant or familiar. As stated in chapter 1, I had the notion that advanced vocabulary, and metaphors in particular, in *Targets* was one of the main reasons as to why the students perceived the textbook as difficult.

Their background knowledge is also relevant to comprehension. Naturally, with all these nationalities represented in this study, the students bring along different types of schemata. They have different sets of linguistic and cultural knowledge embedded. A lack of linguistic and/or cultural knowledge may lead to interpretations based on inferences drawn from the texts and their schemata, and hence not perceiving the speaker or writer's intended meaning (Cardoso and Vieira 2006). In other words, students' misinterpretation of metaphors may be their "use of different cultural references when attempting to interpret them" (Littlemore 2003:4). As metaphors often are culturally-loaded expressions, shared cultural knowledge is an important asset among language learners to infer the intended meaning of these expressions (Littlemore 2003). Due to the relatively low score on the test, especially among the minority students, I consider it likely that a lack of shared cultural knowledge has influenced the result.

Even though metaphors are universal (cf section 2.1.1), they are not universal in the sense of being presented through the same linguistic wording. We share the notion of conceptual metaphors, but how these are presented is highly dependent on our cultural experiences. As stated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), conceptual metaphors are mostly grounded in embodied experiences. According to Falck (2012), the variation in these embodied experiences is given by our cultural experiences (MacArthur 2012). Hence, they will not be similar in all

languages. Further, she claims that not only language-external cultural understanding and interpretation are crucial in terms of conceptual metaphors related to bodily experiences, but in addition “what is encoded in language and how what is encoded in language relates to the world around us” are decisive (MacArthur 2012:110). In my opinion, this supports the importance of working thoroughly with linguistic expressions containing metaphors in L2 learning. They need to be aware of the fact that the meaning of a well-known metaphorical expression in their L1, not always is the same in a similar expression in the L2. Falck (2012) claims that in order to comprehend cross-cultural metaphor use, one needs to be aware of the “differences between languages at the level of metaphor” (MacArthur 2012:130). I agree with her view that people’s native language and how these languages are used to describe different experiences, “shapes the specific metaphors that are learned in a second language” (MacArthur 2012:131).

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that in all three categories the scores were in the same order according to language background and gender. The majority boys had the highest score, next on the list were the majority girls, then the minority girls and last, the minority boys. This coincides with the results Golden (2005) received on her test about metaphorical expressions, that minority students do not seem to understand metaphorical expressions to the same extent as majority students (Gibbs 2008).

There is no secret that reading improves vocabulary. One of the main reasons for students’ lack of comprehension in vocabulary is reading. In general, boys read less than girls, and research shows that boys lag behind girls with more than a year when comes to reading abilities (Svingen 2011). Svingen (2011) claims that reading is considered out of date, and is not perceived as trendy or tough. Boys are currently more interested in gaming than in reading. This trend may lead to a decline in their reading abilities. Tests like the PISA test confirm that Norwegian students are less skilled readers than students in many other European countries (PISA 2009). However, the girls have a much higher score than the boys. The results in my test match the statistics in the PISA test; the majority students score significantly higher than the minority students, especially among the boys. Certainly, reading deficiency will affect language, both in terms of comprehension and production. Metaphorical expressions, which do not carry literal meanings and according to my test are more difficult to comprehend than other linguistic expressions, may pose additional challenges in language learning, especially to the poorer readers. However, it is important to pinpoint the majority boys had the best overall score on the test, and the result does not support the results of PISA.

Next, I will state my conclusion.

## 6.0 Conclusion

In this thesis I have examined metaphor comprehension among EFL learners in the general education program, Vg1, based on their textbook *Targets*. The main purpose was to find out if metaphorical expressions are more difficult to comprehend than ordinary language, to what extent Norwegian EFL students understand metaphorical expressions in *Targets*, and if there is a distinction between majority and minority students in their comprehension of metaphorical expressions. I hypothesized that metaphorical expressions would be more difficult to comprehend than ordinary lexical expressions, and that the minority students would struggle more with comprehension of metaphorical expressions than the majority students. All these hypotheses considered, I was also interested in results that might confirm or invalidate my impression that the language in the textbook was too difficult for many students, mostly due to the language and vocabulary in it.

Different theories on our understanding of metaphors were presented and discussed in chapter 2. Moreover, types of metaphorical expressions, such as phrasal verbs and idioms, were described and linked to L2 teaching and learning. Crucial elements concerning metaphors and L2 learning, such as transparency, metaphor processing and metaphoric competence, were also included.

In chapter 3, the reason for my choice of research method and the research itself was outlined.

The analysis in chapter 4 and the discussion in chapter 5 indicate that metaphor comprehension is challenging in EFL learning, both for majority and minority students. However, the minority students score lower than the majority students on all three categories tested. It is noteworthy, that the minority boys, in particular, are the ones who fall short in their metaphoric competence. In general, C2 items constituted the biggest challenge. I expected C2 items to pose difficulties for minority students, since they have a different mother tongue than Norwegian. The fact that the majority students also had a low score on this type of metaphorical expressions was a surprise. The metaphorical expressions which had the highest fault rate, both the majority and minority group included, often contained phrasal verbs or idioms. Where an incorrect answer was found, a literal meaning of the metaphorical expression was the most likely one to have been ticked off. In addition, the students often chose an incorrect alternative similar in meaning to the original one. For some of the conventional metaphorical expressions used in test, the notion that they are easier to process

because they are more transparent than novel metaphors is not confirmed (cf *cold fish* and *armed to the teeth*).

Furthermore, most students stated that they found *Targets* just right for their level of English. To a large extent their perception of *Targets* matched their overall score on the test. However, among the students who found it just right, the average score was about 80%. As I see it, having a fault rate of almost 20% indicates that the language in *Targets*, and especially metaphorical expressions, might be difficult to comprehend after all. I also see the findings as a sign that many students have not reached the expected competence aims in LK06.

First, I wanted to investigate if metaphorical expressions are more difficult to comprehend than ordinary lexical expressions. Based on the results of the test, analyzed and discussed in chapter 4 and 5, metaphorical expressions are more difficult to comprehend than ordinary lexical expressions. Hence, my first hypothesis is confirmed. Still, the difference in percentage between the incorrect answers in the distracters group and both the metaphorical expression groups is not significant enough to draw any major conclusions from. It only points to a tendency. However, if we look at the results of the distracters versus the C2 items only, the hypothesis is strengthened. C2 items are clearly more difficult to comprehend than ordinary lexical language. In other words, metaphorical expressions in English with a Norwegian equivalent constitute the most difficult type to comprehend.

As metaphorical expressions are shown to be more difficult than ordinary lexical expressions, there is an obvious need to focus on these types of expressions in language teaching and learning. To work with metaphors in the classroom should be as much a part of vocabulary training as any other types of words and expressions. Golden's (2005) claim (cf chapter 1) that students struggle in comprehending metaphorical expressions holds for English as well.

Second, I wanted to investigate to what extent Norwegian EFL students are able to understand metaphorical expressions in texts representative of the expected level of English in the LK06 at Vg1. As the overall result on metaphorical expressions portrays that the students understood more than 80% of the tasks, it seems as if they are able to understand metaphorical expressions to quite a large extent. Nevertheless, I think this is a low enough percentage to be concerned about the metaphoric competence they possess. To improve their language skills in general and strive for native-like competence, both language teachers and learners need to focus more on learning metaphorical expressions. However, is this score crucial when it comes to their overall comprehension of the language found in the texts and the tasks in the



textbook? Does the score indicate that some of the content is likely to be missed out on because of difficulties in metaphor comprehension? For some of the students I think the answer is yes, especially for the minority boys. Some of the students with the lowest scores admitted that they found the language in *Targets* difficult, and if we look at the results in that group, they point to a confirmation of my hypothesis.

However, most students felt that the level of the language in *Targets* was just right, even though many of them scored only about 80%. If they perceive the language as just right, I think it is important that I believe them. Hence, one can assume that even if they are able to understand these metaphorical expressions only to a certain extent, the language in *Targets* (containing texts representative of the expected level of English in LK06 at Vg1), to most students, is not too difficult. As mentioned in chapter 1, one of the reasons for the topic of my investigation was the notion that the language in *Targets* was too difficult, and partly due to metaphorical expressions. This seems to apply only for a small group of students. Hence, the hypothesis was partly correct.

The final topic to be investigated was metaphor comprehension among majority students as opposed to minority students. I wanted to find out if there is a distinction between the two groups. The results in the test showed that, overall, the minority students scored lower than the majority students. The minority boys, in particular, scored considerably low on C2 items. Metaphorical expressions seem to pose the biggest challenge for this group of students. Svingen's (2011) research on boys and reading and the results of the PISA test point to the same problem. The minority boys fall behind on metaphoric competence, as well as vocabulary comprehension in general. This further supports the view of incorporating metaphoric competence in language learning (Norwegian included) to a much larger extent than today. Moreover, in the midst of this, reading is crucial. In my opinion, what seems to be the most important tool in classroom, besides the teacher, namely the textbook, needs improvement, not only to enhance the joy of reading, but also to include tasks concerning metaphoric competence.

## **6.1 Looking back**

Looking back, one realizes that there are always things that could have been done differently. As mentioned in chapter 3, using a multiple choice test has its limitations. The answers are already there, and the participants have to pick an alternative, which again may lead to guessing if they do not know the correct answer. It would have been most interesting to know

more about the processing behind the choices the students made. To what extent did they actually believe that the answer they picked was the correct one and why? How often did they guess? Which expressions did they find the most difficult? Interviews would have clarified this to a certain extent, but that would have been immensely time consuming. I believe that open-ended questions could, to a larger extent, have given a more realistic description of their actual metaphor comprehension, as they would have to write the correct meaning themselves.

Moreover, my sample is rather small and it would have been interesting to conduct the test across the country to find out if it is representative of the nation as a whole. Also, the distribution between majority and minority students would have been closer to the real distribution of 14% immigrants in Norway. Other textbooks representing the five-hour course in English on Vg1 could also have been included as contributors of metaphorical expressions to be tested. More distracters could have been included to weaken or strengthen my hypothesis that metaphorical expressions are more difficult to comprehend than ordinary lexical expressions.

Furthermore, some of the alternatives I made in the multiple choice test might have led to incorrect answers that could have been avoided, in that they were too similar in meaning to the original sentence. Hence, because of this, the overall result might have been affected. Moreover, I suspect that where the students failed to find the appropriate connotation, they just guessed when they tried to tick off the correct answer. Hence, I will never know for sure to what extent they actually knew the meaning of the expressions tested. Still, based on the results I got, I think my research points to something relevant concerning metaphor comprehension. It gives a representative indication of the fact that metaphorical comprehension in the EFL classroom is a challenge to many EFL learners. The studies made by Kosciuk (2003), Kulbrandstad (1998), Golden (2005), Cardoso and Vieira (2006) and Nacey (2010) support my findings.

My findings are valid because the test measures what it is supposed to measure. The sample of the test was a representative, rather homogenous group of students at Vg1, the general education program. Moreover, the examples in the test were taken from a commonly used book, representative for the expected language level at Vg1.

## **6.2 Further research**

This study has shown the need to investigate metaphor comprehension in foreign language teaching and learning further, not only in English, but also in the other languages that most lower and upper secondary schools offer, like German, French and Spanish. A lack of metaphoric competence prevents language learners from reaching native-like competence.

As metaphoric competence is not explicitly mentioned in LK06, it would be interesting to investigate to what extent language teachers are aware of metaphoric competence, and how or if they work to improve students' metaphoric competence? To what extent are metaphors included when they work with vocabulary in class?

Furthermore, as mentioned above, a larger study across the nation might result in findings which could be used in a proposal to change to the role of metaphoric competence in the English subject curriculum, and hence impact the content of textbooks and language teaching in general.

## **6.3 Implications for L2 teaching and learning**

I agree with Littlemore and Low (2006) that metaphor is very important in language learning because metaphoric competence is necessary in all areas of communicative competence. Since metaphors are everywhere, metaphoric competence “can contribute centrally to grammatical competence, textual competence, illocutionary competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence” (Littlemore and Low 2006:4).

Nacey (2010) sheds light on metaphorical competence as a likely contributor to the overall communicative competence of a learner. In that respect, metaphorical competence is crucial in order to access the intended meaning of an L1 writer or speaker and to effectively convey their own beliefs and ideas. Moreover, a “heightened awareness of metaphor as a phenomenon can lead to increased metaphor competence” (Alexander 1983, Deignan et al 1997 in Nacey 2010:34). Hence, we need to focus on metaphors when working on vocabulary and grammatical structures in L2 teaching. Furthermore, research has shown that stored vocabulary is helped by explicit knowledge of metaphorical motivations. This is also the case for the generation of innovative metaphors in L2 (Nacey 2010:34). This means that being aware of conceptual links is advantageous in using and perceiving the language effectively. Consequently, this is important because figurative language is so naturally embedded in our language.

“Like any other language material, metaphorical content takes time to be understood, repeated, internalized, and finally, actively used in production. Materials need to be introduced gradually, repeated and reinforced in a variety of ways through different skills and only through such an approach will it become part of students’ mental lexicon. Once they have grasped the lexical items and went over them enough times, students will eventually spontaneously use them during language production, which is essentially an aim for language production” (Radić-Bojanić 2013:144).

In most subjects, studying textbook material is an essential part of students’ time, both at school and at home. These books are often filled with detailed and complex information. In other words, they serve as tools for knowledge acquisition. This also applies for L2 teaching and learning. Learners need to use strategies when they read in order to decode, understand and also produce texts. Teachers need to focus on this to help students improve their learning strategies. Since many teachers rely on textbooks in their teaching, strategy instruction is a decisive part of students’ acquisition. Hence, when working with texts and metaphors, teachers should focus on activating students’ prior knowledge to strengthen their abilities to comprehend and learn. Without schemata when learning about a topic, important acquisition may be lost (Garner 1987).

When working with metaphorical expressions in language teaching and learning, a good starting point is “expressions whose figurative nature is immediately apparent” (Holme 2004:93). I agree with Holme (2004) on this, as these types of expressions are more likely to be understood due to their imageability and high transparency. For more advanced students Holme (2004) suggests that as part of their learning strategy, they can look for metaphors in texts and practice identifying key conceptual metaphors. Once the students have identified different conceptual metaphors, they can build a network and add “the metaphor’s different lexico-grammatical realisations as they come across them” (Holme 2004:133). Furthermore, teachers may present language learners with primary metaphors. They can be more specific and direct and ask students: “Where exactly is the metaphor in this expression?” (Gibbs 2008:219). Teachers can ask students to find metaphors, as well as give them examples and have them explain them.

Total physical response (TPR) learning is for instance by Holme (2001) and Lindstromberg (2001) seen as a useful tool to acquire metaphoric items. Here students may act out the expressions by being physical. This is linked to the fact that many metaphors are embodied (see. section 2.1.1). This means that the sources not only refer to a) “sensory experience, to the human body, or to relatively familiar actions involving it”, but also b) “evoke some sort of

sensory response by the listener” (Gibbs 2008:218). However, it is important to keep in mind that not all metaphors are physical in the sense that they can be acted out (Gibbs 2008).

By putting metaphor onto the pedagogical agenda, I am not suggesting it as a way to deduce the universal principles of meaning construction. But it does make a second language less strange by making its meanings appear more principled. An awareness of metaphor can explain how that unfamiliar world of meaning has come to be. Understanding the conceptual core of language will put learners at play inside the network of schematisations from which the meanings of language have been formed. Holme (2004:149).

## 6.4 Summing up

After this research, my notion that metaphorical expressions often are perceived as difficult in the EFL classroom is further strengthened due to the findings in my own research, as well as other research conducted in this field. The difference in comprehension of the expressions among majority and minority students in my test gives rise to concern.

“It has been demonstrated that if teachers systematically draw the attention of language learners to the source domains of linguistic metaphors and of vocabulary involving metaphor, then the learners’ depth of knowledge for that language, and their ability to retain it can improve significantly” (Littlemore and Low 2006:7). The fact that metaphors are everywhere, but still seem to complicate language, and hence pose a problem for second language learners, will affect communication. My personal belief is that to what extent metaphors are focused upon in class depends on the teacher, especially with the absence of focus on metaphors in both the English subject curriculum and in the textbook *Targets*. In the end, most of the time anyway, it is the teacher who sets the agenda for what is emphasized in the classroom. This means that teachers in general have to realize that metaphoric competence is crucial in language learning. It seems to me, that metaphoric competence is neglected in the Norwegian classroom. It is a complex undertaking due to the endless list of words and expressions, but is nonetheless very important in language teaching in order to aim for communicative competence on a higher level than the level of “tourist-English”.

*“But the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor (...) it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilarities”.*

Aristotele (322 B.C.)

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Instruksjonsskiema

I denne oppgaven finner du 40 setninger fra læreboka i engelsk, *Targets*, og tre forslag til andre måter å si det samme på. Bare ett forslag for hver setning er korrekt.

Les hver setning og alle de tre alternativene. Velg det alternativet du mener passer best som omskriving av det som står i kursiv, og sett en ring rundt det alternativet du har valgt.

Eksempel:

The large woman simply turned around and *kicked him right in his blue-jeaned sitter* means

- a) That the large woman kicked his blue jeans
- b) That the boy, wearing blue jeans, kicked the large woman
- c) That the large woman kicked him in the butt

## Appendix 2: The test

### Tasks

1. He must have known *that she would never dare to tell him to hurry*  
means
  - a) that she was going to ask him to hurry
  - b) that she was too afraid to ask him to hurry
  - c) that he had to hurry to tell her that she was a dear friend
  
2. *Can your textbooks be useful sources?*  
means
  - a) Are your textbooks unimportant?
  - b) Do your textbooks list their sources?
  - c) Can your textbooks help you find important information?
  
3. *England is a great nation full of the coldest fish in the world*  
means
  - a) that England has a lot of cold water fish
  - b) that England is full of insensitive people
  - c) that England is full of caring people
  
4. When Edward has left, *his father has no one to turn to but his diary*  
means
  - a) that his father looks for his diary
  - b) that when Edward has left, his father turns around
  - c) that his father has no human being to talk to
  
5. He must also have known that if he waited long enough, *he could drive her nearly into hysterics*  
means
  - a) that he was able to change her mood
  - b) that his driving could make her hysteric

c) that he made her drive the car into the garage

6. *She began hunting frantically* in the back of the car

means

a) that she was searching with determination

b) that she was shooting from the car

c) that she had problems breathing

7. *What label would you put on this story?*

means

a) What piece of plastic or paper would you put on the story to give information about it?

b) How would you classify the story?

c) What title would you give the story?

8. *However, it is often the women who really are responsible for running things*

means

a) that the women take care of things

b) that the women exercise with things that move fast

c) that the women run in a hurried way

9. *Are the characters well drawn* or are they stereotypes?

means

a) Are there nice drawings of the characters?

b) Do the characters behave properly?

c) Are the characters described in a good way?

10. *We would play cards at night when she knocked off*

means

a) that she usually left when we played cards

b) that she knocked on something when we were playing cards

c) that she usually fell asleep when we played cards

11. She told me it was wise not to sleep with him, *because then I could dump him anytime I wanted to*

means

- a) that I could get rid of him when I wanted to
- b) that I could thump him if I wanted to
- c) that I could bump into him anywhere

12. I sat very still, trying not to look at them and *my mouth went dry as paper*

means

- a) that I started crying
- b) that I felt unable to speak
- c) that I dried my mouth with a piece of paper

13. *Imagine that you were to shoot a film*

means

- a) imagine that you are an actor in a film
- b) imagine that you make a film
- c) imagine that you fire a gun in the movie theatre

14. *The dead dogs had been fed to the other dogs to keep them alive*

means

- a) somebody had given the other dogs dead dogs to eat
- b) some people had to eat the dead dogs to survive
- c) the other dogs died because they were given the dead dogs to eat

15. *The Captain of the Titanic, Edward Smith, went down with his ship*

means

- a) that the Captain jumped off the Titanic when it sank
- b) that the Captain went down to the lower decks
- c) that the Captain drowned when the Titanic sank

16. But when Solomon talks to him about his sweet childhood memories, *he finally breaks through the hard shell* of his brainwashed son

means

- a) that Solomon destroys a washed shell that his son owns
- b) that Solomon's son understands what his father tells him
- c) that Solomon talks about the time he and his son washed shells together

17. *What do you think led to this change of heart?*

means

- a) What do you think made them change their opinion?
- b) What do you think led to this heart transplant?
- c) What do you think suddenly made them love each other?

18. *The fishing line idea, they agreed had been a stroke of a genius*

means

- a) that a smart person had the good idea about a fishing line
- b) that the fishing line idea caused a genius to get a stroke
- c) that a genius had nailed the fishing line to a tree

19. *Yesterday's enthusiasm hung on a thread?*

means

- a) that somebody was really happy about something
- b) that somebody was not as happy as before
- c) that somebody had put a thread into a needle

20. *My advice is well tempered by experience*

means

- a) that my advice is just a guess
- b) that my advice is based on my good temper
- c) that I have very good reasons for saying this

21. The thought of these intimacies in particular filled her with dread and *made her break out in sweat*

means

- a) that these thoughts made her start sweating
- b) that these thoughts made her run away from prison
- c) these thoughts made her end the relationship

22. I'm sure that up until that minute *he'd been living in awe of anybody with a college education*

means

- a) that he had been living together with a college educated student
- b) that he had hated people with a college education
- c) that he had respected, but also feared, people with a college education

23. Before long *I was sitting on that toilet seat, writing a poem*

means

- a) I decorated the toilet seat with a poem
- b) I was sitting on the toilet seat, reading a poem
- c) I wrote a poem, while I was sitting on the toilet seat

24. For the next ten or fifteen minutes *he poured out the story of his life*

means

- a) that he told the story of his life without stopping
- b) that he poured drinks like never before in his life
- c) that he refused to talk about his life

25. *I tried to keep my eyes on the boy from then on*

means

- a) that I often stared at the boy
- b) that I looked after the boy
- c) that I tried to avoid the boy



26. Do you ever think it is right *to take the law into your own hands*?

means

- a) is it right to steal?
- b) is it right to punish someone when you want to?
- c) is it right to arrest someone?

27. Mother said she did not have the money and even if she did have, *she was not prepared to give it to me*

means

- a) she was not ready to give the money to me
- b) she was happy to give the money to me
- c) she was not sure she would give the money to me

28. He became *bitten by remorse*

means

- a) that he felt guilty
- b) that he was bitten by an insect
- c) that he bit his lip

29. *British to the backbone, that's what I am*

means

- a) that I, from Britain, have a painful backbone
- b) that I feel really British
- c) that I do not feel British at all

30. *Something that Ramsay said stung him*

means

- a) that Ramsey made him laugh
- b) that Ramsey said something about a stinging wasp
- c) that Ramsey said something that hurt him

31. *Ambitious youngsters tend to find the pubs un-cool and old-fashioned*

means

- a) that ambitious, young people always hate the pubs
- b) that most ambitious, young people do not think the pubs are modern and cool
- c) that most ambitious, young people like the pubs

32. *What do you think the future holds for the father?*

means

- a) What do you think the father is holding in his hands?
- b) What do you think will happen to the father in the future?
- c) What do you think the father wants to do in the future?

33. *Migrants who go to start a new life in a foreign country are faced with many challenges*

means

- a) that migrants look worried because of all the challenges they meet in a new, foreign country
- b) that migrants in a new, foreign country meet many challenges
- c) that migrants in a new, foreign country like new challenges

34. *He could make a dash for it down the hall*

means

- a) that he could try to run down the hall
- b) that he could walk slowly down the hall
- c) that he could throw some water down the hall

35. *Did Luella teach the boy a lesson?*

means

- a) Did Luella teach the boy a subject at school?
- b) Did Luella punish the boy?
- c) Did the boy trick Luella?

36. *I was a baby when I was put in an orphanage*

means

- a) I was a baby when I was placed in a home for children with no parents
- b) I was a baby when I was placed in a new family
- c) I was a baby when I was placed in a hospital

37. *Segregation and discrimination are effective tools* which have excluded minorities from equal opportunities in many areas

means

- a) that segregation and discrimination work well to build homes for minority groups
- b) that segregation and discrimination are laws which include minorities in many areas
- c) that segregation and discrimination are actions which exclude minorities in many areas

38. *I reached him a bottle and he emptied it*

means

- a) he gave me an empty bottle
- b) I gave him a bottle and he drank everything in it
- c) I gave him a bottle and he broke it

39. *The wine sparkled in his eyes*

means

- a) that he spilt wine at somebody
- b) that he felt happy and alive
- c) that he felt sick from drinking wine

40. *You came out of the Minnesota woodlands armed to the teeth*

means

- a) that you came out of the Minnesota woodlands with a lot of experience
- b) that you came out of the Minnesota woodlands with a toothache

c) that you came out of the Minnesota woodlands with weapons

### Appendix 3: Students' background information

#### Fyll inn

1. Sett kryss: ☐ jente ☐ gutt
2. Alder ..... år
3. Hva er morsmålet ditt? .....
4. Hvilke(t) språk snakker du hjemme .....
5. Hvilke(t) språk har foreldrene dine som morsmål .....
6. Er du født og oppvokst i Norge? .....
7. **Hvis nei**, hvor gammel var du da du kom til Norge? ..... år
8. Hvor gammel var du da du begynte å lære engelsk? ..... år
9. Hva synes du om språket/ordforrådet i læreboka *Targets*? Sett kryss der det passer:  
☐ for lett ☐ lett ☐ passe ☐ vanskelig ☐ for vanskelig

Hvis du har noen kommentarer til testen, kan du skrive dette her:

#### Appendix 4: Results multiple choice test

Sex: x = boy y = girl

Language background: 1 = No/majority 2 = No as second language/minority

Evaluation of the book: 1 = too easy 2 = easy 3 = just right 4 = difficult  
5 = too difficult

Started learning English: only exceptions mentioned

Student	Sex	Language background	Started learning English (age)	Distracters	C1 items	C2 items	Total score	Evaluation of the book
1	y	1		0	1	0	97,5	2
2	y	2	8	1	4	0	87,5	2
3	y	1		1	1	2	90	2
4	x	1		0	0	1	97,5	2
5	y	1		0	0	2	95	2
6	x	2		1	2	4	82,5	2
7	x	1		0	0	1	97,5	2
8	y	1		1	2	3	85	2
9	x	1		0	1	4	87,5	2
10	y	1		0	2	4	85	3
11	y	1		2	2	2	85	2
12	y	1		0	1	5	85	2
13	y	1		0	5	4	77,5	3
14	y	2		0	1	0	97,5	2
15	y	1		1	0	0	97,5	2
16	y	1		4	8	8	50	4
17	x	2		2	8	10	50	2
18	y	1		1	3	1	87,5	2
19	x	1		0	0	2	95	2
20	x	1		4	8	7	52,5	3
21	x	2		3	9	13	37,5	2
22	x	1		1	0	1	95	2
23	x	2		2	5	4	72,5	2
24	x	2		0	3	8	72,5	2
25	y	2		2	1	6	77,5	2
26	x	1		0	3	10	67,5	2
27	y	1		0	1	2	92,5	2
28	y	1		2	3	3	80	2
29	y	2	8	1	7	4	70	2
30	x	2		3	3	7	67,5	2
31	x	2		2	1	3	85	3
32	x	1		2	3	4	77,5	3

33	y	1		3	7	7	57,5	2
34	y	1		0	1	2	92,5	2
35	y	2	9	2	2	5	77,5	2
36	y	2		0	5	7	70	2
37	x	2	4	0	1	4	87,5	2
38	x	2	10	4	7	12	42,5	2
39	x	1		2	6	4	70	1
40	x	1		0	1	3	90	2
41	y	1		1	2	4	82,5	3
42	y	2	8	1	3	6	75	2
43	x	2	5	4	8	9	47,5	2
44	x	1		0	0	1	97,5	1
45	x	1		0	1	0	97,5	2
46	x	2	10	2	0	2	90	2
47	x	2		0	1	3	92,5	2
48	y	1		2	4	4	75	2
49	y	2		0	0	2	95	2
50	x	2	7	0	2	9	72,5	2
51	x	1		1	0	2	92,5	1
52	y	1		3	0	3	85	2
53	y	1		0	0	2	95	2
54	y	1		0	4	2	85	2
55	x	1		0	0	2	95	2
56	y	2	14	3	9	13	37,5	3
57	y	2		1	0	3	90	3