

# METAPHORS OF FORMAL LEARNING, EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE AMONG GHANAIAN STUDENTS: THE CASE OF KNUST

Esther Serwaah Afreh\*, Harriet Appiah Kyeremeh\*\*  
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana  
[esafreh.cass@knust.edu.gh](mailto:esafreh.cass@knust.edu.gh)\*, [appiahkyeremehharriet@yahoo.com](mailto:appiahkyeremehharriet@yahoo.com)\*\*

The paper examined the metaphorical structure of the notions of formal learning, education and knowledge in Ghana within the framework of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), put forward by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The aim was to identify any underlying conceptual metaphors in the written expressions of selected students at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana, on these notions. It also sought to examine the types of the conceptual metaphors, to identify any motivational factors underlying the metaphors from the different groups of students, and to explore any cross-cultural similarities and differences between the metaphors identified and those identified in Chinese (Jin & Cortazzi 2008; and Cortazzi & Jin 2011) and in Japanese (Berendt 2008 & Hiraga 2008). One hundred and five participants were purposively sampled to provide descriptions of the notions of formal learning, education and knowledge. The analysis revealed thirty-eight conceptual metaphors of learning, education and knowledge. Twenty-one (21) of these were structural metaphors and seventeen (17) were ontological metaphors. The analysis also revealed that the class levels of the students are motivational factors in their conceptualisations of the notions. The analysis revealed that metaphors that refer to activities and entities which denote the notions of *effort* and *struggle* such as LEARNING IS A STRUGGLE and EDUCATION IS AN ADVENTURE were predominant in the expressions of first year students, while those that suggest “endlessness”, such as EDUCATION IS AN ENDLESS ENTITY or KNOWLEDGE IS AN ENDLESS ENTITY reflected in the expressions of students in the third and final years.

The analysis also revealed a high degree of similarity between the data from Ghana and those from the Japanese and Chinese cultures. The metaphor LEARNING IS A KEY which had been identified in the language of Chinese students (Jin & Cortazzi 2011: 121) was also identified in the Ghanaian context. Again, the metaphor LEARNING IS A JOURNEY, which was identified in the Ghanaian context was also identified in Japanese (Hiraga 2008: 56-60). There were, however, a few cross-culture variations. These were discovered at more detailed aspects of the source and target domains. The notion of “struggle”, for example, occurred as a source. In the Ghanaian context, we identified the metaphors LEARNING IS A STRUGGLE and EDUCATION IS AN ADVENTURE. In the Japanese context, the notion of *struggle* is reflected in the metaphor LEARNING IS WAR (Berendt (2008). Moreover, whereas *education* is conceptualised as a vehicle in Japanese (Hiraga 2008: 60), in the Ghanaian context, it is *learning* that is conceptualised as such. Again, whereas we identified the metaphor EDUCATION IS A SEED in the Ghanaian context, Jin & Cortazzi (2011: 121) identified the metaphor LEARNING IS FARMING in the expressions of Chinese students. Again, whereas EDUCATION IS A PERSONALITY ENHANCER in the Ghanaian context, LEARNING IS POLISHING in the Japanese language (Berendt 2008: 96). Again, whereas in the Japanese data “LEARNING IS A VALUABLE THING” (Berendt 2008: 95), in the Ghanaian context, EDUCATION IS WEALTH.

## References

- Berendt, E. A. (2008) Intersections and diverging paths: Conceptual Patterns on learning in English and Japanese. In: E. A. Berendt (ed.) *Metaphors of Learning, cross-cultural perspectives*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 73-102
- Cortazzi, M. and Jin, L. (2011) The changing landscapes of a journey: educational metaphors in China. In: Ryan, Janette, (ed.) *Education Reform in China: Changing concepts, contexts and practices. Routledge Contemporary China Series*. London, U.K.: Routledge. 113-131.
- Hiraga, M. K. (2008) Tao of learning: Metaphors Japanese students live by. In E. A. Berendt (ed.) *Metaphors for Learning: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. Amsterdam, John Benjamins Pub. 55-72.
- Jin, L. and Cortazzi, M. (2008) Images of teachers, learning and questioning in Chinese cultures of learning, In: E. A. Berendt (ed.) *Metaphors of Learning, cross-cultural perspectives*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 177-202
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.