



IDEAS LIKE DEER: AN ECOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF SIMILES IN FOUR NATURE BOOKS

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Abstract: Similes animate languages and make communication replete with rich imagery. They are also an indispensable part of any spoken or written text on nature. The present study investigates similes in four nature books by four famous nature authors from different backgrounds through a cognitive lens. Taking into consideration the nature of the source and target domains, each domain was interrogated and, thus, grouped based on fifteen semantically significant categories or variables. Accordingly, the motivation behind their use is unearthed. As conceptual devices for understanding reality, similes are a way of thinking about the living entities. Carefully constructed similes can intensify certain features attributed to a myriad of species over the planet, and thereby enforce sustainable thinking. Finally, the study discusses the importance of nature similes in foreign language learning contexts. It is believed that language learners should be encouraged to write about nature and simultaneously practice the use of creative similes that appropriately fit the ecological context.

Keywords: Ecolinguistics; simile; EFL; conceptual metaphor theory; new materialism

Resumo: Os símiles enriquecem a língua e enchem a comunicação de imagens. Eles são também uma parte indispensável de qualquer texto sobre a natureza, falado ou escrito. Este artigo investiga símiles em quatro livros sobre a natureza, escritos por quatro autores ecologistas de diferentes origens, a partir de uma ótica cognitiva. Levando em consideração a natureza do domínio-origem e do domínio-alvo, cada um deles foi interrogado e, então, agrupado com base em quinze categorias ou variáveis semanticamente significantes. Com isso, descobre-se a motivação por trás de seu uso. Como recursos conceituais para entender a realidade, os símiles são um modo de pensar sobre entidades vivas. Símiles cuidadosamente formados podem ressaltar alguns traços atribuídos a uma miríade de espécies sobre o planeta e, assim, estimular o pensamento sustentável. Finalmente, o artigo discute a importância dos símiles sobre a natureza no contexto da aprendizagem de língua estrangeira. Acredita-se que o aprendiz de língua deve ser encorajado a escrever sobre a natureza e, simultaneamente, passar a usar símiles criativos que se adequam ao contexto ecológico.

Palavras-chave: Ecolinguística; símile; EFL; teoria da metáfora conceptual; novo materialismo.

1. Introduction

Many languages are dying and, thus, making the earth a monoglot place. Crystal (2003, p. 191) says that this would be "the greatest intellectual disaster the planet has ever known". Nettle and Romaine (2000, p. 204), in their discussion on the hegemonic spread of monolingualism, write that "our global village must be truly multicultural and multilingual, or it will not exist at all". Language preservation matters a lot for linguistic diversity is utterly linked with biodiversity. "When a language dies, a leaf fall from the tree of the human mind", warns Griffiths (1999, p. 221). In actuality, a way of being and thinking becomes unknown when a language shades into extinction. To devastate a land is to destroy its language. "To silence a bird is to silence a part of human language and to render a species extinct is to make a simile die", argues Griffiths (1999, p. 223). She continues to say that having doe-eyes, fighting like a tiger, badgering someone, looking owlsh, offering a fishy remark, etc. once were very common expressions and now have lost their figurative incidence and occurrence.

Similes as the main features of imagination have a great influence on the creation of poetic images in literary texts. Nature writers use similes to leave the readers with vivid visual impressions. The distinction between metaphor and simile is one of oldest literary phenomenon in rhetorical theory. The English term *metaphor* derives from Middle French *metaphore*, which comes from Latin *metaphora*, originally from Greek *metaphora*, which means "a transfer" or from *metapherein* which means "transfer; carry over" (KÖVECSES, 2010a, p. 266). From another standpoint, the term *simile* derives from Latin *simile* meaning "resemblance and likeness" (FADAE, 2011, p. 22).

Similes as forms of comparison have an immensely descriptive function. They invigorate languages. Actually, Pierini (2007) is of the opinion that similes fulfil multiple functions. They not only help to communicate briefly and efficiently, but also act as thinking tools to reflect upon the world in novel ways by creating relations of similarity. Rakusan (2004, p. 172) defines a simile "as an asymmetric binary construction divided into two parts by a comparator. The comparator is a stable sign of similes and it is represented mostly by conjunctions, such as *like* or *as*".

Similes like metaphors play a crucial structural role in the processing of conceptual information. These literary devices may take a variety of forms, ranging from conventional, which are commonly used in everyday life, to poetic and creative ones. Discussions on metaphors and similes within various academic fields such as linguistics, cognitive sciences, psychology, philosophy etc. have made a large body of literature. Cognitive linguistics, in particular, views similes in no way different from metaphors for it insists that similes also include an underlying conceptual metaphor in their structure. Lakoff and Turner (1989, p. 133) believe that metaphor and simile are interpretations of the same phenomenon since both are metaphorical statements and simile statements "can employ conceptual metaphor". Disregarding the syntax of metaphor and simile, they are both manifestations of a single basic phenomenon.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) consider metaphor as a fundamental part of everyday language and thought in their shared work *Metaphors We Live By*. Their cognitive

approach to metaphor stands against the traditional view of metaphor that imprisoned it within the area of rhetoric. Instead, they consider metaphor as a tool for perceiving the surrounding cosmos.

Concisely, grasping and experiencing one type of thing in terms of another is at the core of a metaphor (LAKOFF & JOHNSON, 1980). An adequate perception of a metaphor, by implication, is possible provided that there is a set of conceptual mappings between source and target domains. Source domains contain the concrete and tangible aspects of conceptual structure, whereas target domains include the abstract and complex aspects of conceptual structure (KÖVECSES, 2010). In order to make the connection between the source domain and the target domain the term mapping is used, which stands for a transfer of meaning from one domain to another domain (LAKOFF, 1992).

Lakoff and Turner (1989) discuss the Great Chain of Being, a hierarchical system concerning the forms of being and how they behave. As a folk theory, it also explains how things are interrelated, which, in turn, illuminates why animals and natural events are employed to specify human mental and physical attributes in addition to why animals and nature events may be ascribed human traits in different languages. The Great Chain Metaphor "allows us to comprehend general human character traits in terms of well-understood nonhuman attributes; and, conversely, it allows us to comprehend less well-understood aspects of the nature of animals and objects in terms of better-understood human characteristics", assert Lakoff and Turner (1989, p. 172). In actuality, hierarchical order of existing entities (from substances and inanimate objects to plants, animals, and finally human beings as the highest level) exist in the Great Chain Metaphor. The higher the entity, the more qualities of functioning it has. Inanimate objects have only physical qualities (complex objects have also structural and functional features), plants have both physical and biological features, animals have in instincts addition to the mentioned qualities. Human beings have all the common features with lower levels and additional particular qualities such as reason, higher-order emotions, language, aesthetic sense, personality, and sociability (LAKOFF & TURNER, 1989). This system develops into a metaphorical system when a specific level of the chain is employed to understand another level.

The neural theory evolved out of the studies of Feldman (2006) and Lakoff (2008). The basic tenet of this theory is that metaphor is in the brain, and as Feldman (2006, p. 38) puts it, "connected concepts are neurally connected". He further argues that neurons function in a complex network. Language and thought are totally dependent on brains, bodies, and experiences (FELDMAN, 2006). Based on Lakoff (2008), human beings are born with this neural circuitry which harmoniously operates on two different areas in the brain, which is precisely what happens when it comes to metaphors. Explicitly, when dealing with a metaphor, the literal meanings of the words which constitute the metaphor activate source domain circuitry, whereas the context in which the metaphor occurs activates the target domain circuitry. The more different groups of neurons are activated together, the stronger the circuit between these two groups (FELDMAN, 2006). Although similes are not deeply discussed through the

lenses of the neural theory, it is assumed that they too are characterized by the same neural circuitry.

This study intends to apply the mechanisms of conceptual metaphor theory to simile as a figure of speech. The model of the conceptual metaphor was originally developed with regard to metaphor theory in a cognitive format. The study suggests that conceptual metaphor theory can be a resourceful tool for apprehending similes. Noticeably, similes have not received their deserved attention in research on literature and ecolinguistics, despite their frequent occurrences in ecological discourses.

The study also seeks to examine how the four famous nature authors from different backgrounds frame and conceptualize nature in their use of similes. Another consideration of this research is to interrogate simile conceptualization and evolution over time.

2. Literature Review

Rakusan (2004) takes into consideration the proportion to which similes in four languages include various genera and species of animals which mostly describe human physical, mental, and social properties. Reportedly, the use of certain linguistic fauna is under the influence of the differences in the language users' eco-cultural landscape. Since the Czech and the German culture were mainly a farming culture in the past, their languages incorporate farm animal similes. On the other hand, people in Russia and England were predominantly seafarers and hunters and, thus, they have a preference for wild birds in their use of similes. Colin (2006) conducts a study to establish the number of idioms, among which similes are listed, mainly concentrating on English idioms and the similarities and differences found in equivalent Swedish idioms. The use of similes appears to be quite common among animal idioms in both English and Swedish. The construction is the same as well. In general, no matter what the number of equivalents, both English and Swedish make use of animal names figuratively. Colin (2006) also concludes that the motivation of animal figurative expressions primarily develops as the result of the fauna found in Sweden for Swedish similes, and English-speaking countries for English similes, respectively. Peters (2007) investigates similes and other evaluative idioms in Australian English from the nineteenth century on in electronic and printed resources. Australian bandicoot is hugely present in similes on financial and emotional misery. Australian birds also give the reference point in similes for loneliness and madness. The country dunny as the built environment is strikingly used in similes to picture someone who is alone or stands out awkwardly. In general, the animal and landscape similes point out one major abstract theme of Australian life that is loneliness. Stamenković (2011) analyzes different types of motivation in English animal similes by grouping them into relatively objective, relatively objective and culture-influenced, culture-influenced similes, and similes motivated by mechanisms such as allegory and irony. The concluding remark is that different similes demand different cognitive processes for interpretation. Marland (2015) focuses on Kathleen Jamie's writing style in the essay 'Findings' which is about the writer's encounter with the objects that litter the landscape of the Outer Hebrides. Her use of metaphors and

similes builds a sort of affinity between the human beings and material substances of all kinds from natural to artificial. The essay also revolves around a sense of the uncanny on plastic waste. The writer subtly investigates the meaning and affect of the waste materials by thrusting aside sarcastic and jeremiadic tones that might hinder this investigation.

3. Method

A resourceful linguistic technique for the evocation of the mind style is the use of figurative language, which, following recent research on metaphor (LAKOFF & JOHNSON, 1980; LAKOFF & TURNER, 1989), can be inferred as mirroring idiosyncratic ways of thinking (SEMINO, 2005). Goatly (1997, p. 185) identifies one use of similes as providing "metaphorical frameworks", which means that simile grounds are often themselves metaphorical. A cognitive analysis of similes was carried out using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (LAKOFF & JOHNSON, 1999) to fathom out how similes are applied to convey environmental knowledge to the consumers of the lyrical text in order to generate concrete and emotive images.

Taking into consideration the nature of the source and target domains, every domain was interrogated and, thus, grouped based on shared conceptual domains. On the whole, fifteen semantically significant categories or variables that were found in the corpus are as follows: Humans and human body parts, trees, plants, flowers, and their components, animals and animal body parts, natural elements, weather, light and darkness, landforms (e.g. hills, mountains, plateaus, valley, as well as shoreline features), heavenly bodies, objects, technology, buildings, roads, and constructions, food and drink, seasons, occasions, and time, abstract concepts (e.g. idea, notion, dream, death, angel, and monster) , and language, science, and art.

The analysis was carried out both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative analysis allows for the comparison of the corpora under the investigation. Qualitative analysis gives deep and detailed information about the corpus, unveiling similarities and differences between the four nature books.

4. Corpus

Books on nature as semiotic textual entities that are constructed with principles provide a second reading to Bakhtin's (1981, p. 294) statement on the multiplicity of voices in discourse:

Language is not a neutral medium; it is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others. The word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language ... but rather it exists in other people's mouth, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions.

This study, thus, involves simile analyses of four books on nature:

1. *A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There*

Aldo Leopold (January 11, 1887 – April 21, 1948) was an American author, scientist, ecologist, forester, and environmentalist. Describing the land around the author's home in Sauk County, Wisconsin, the collection of essays advocates Leopold's (1949) idea of a land ethic, or a responsible relationship existing between people and the land they inhabit.

2. *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology*

David Abram (born June 24, 1957) is an American philosopher, cultural ecologist, performance artist, and founder of the Alliance for Wild Ethics. In *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology*, Abram (2010) takes readers into a pleasant journey to visit wild creatures and terrains. His insights grow out of a naturalist's experience in the wild, though encounters with moose, spiders, forests, and shamans.

3. *The Living Mountain: A Celebration of the Cairngorm Mountains of Scotland*

Nan (Anna) Shepherd (11 February 1893 – 23 February 1981) was a Scottish novelist and poet. In this masterpiece of nature writing, Shepherd (1977) describes her journeys into the Cairngorm Mountains of Scotland. Her intense, poetic prose describes the rocks, rivers, creatures and hidden aspects of this remarkable landscape. This non-fiction was written during the 1940s and was not published until 1977.

4. *Sightlines: A Conversation with the Natural World*

Kathleen Jamie (born 13 May 1962) is a prize-winning Scottish poet and renowned nature writer. In *Sightlines: A Conversation with the Natural World*, Jamie (2012) lyrically talks about her close engagement with nature and constantly questions the relationship human beings have with birds, whales, the sea, the land and the weather.

5. Results

The simile interrogations of the corpus along with some examples are as follows:

The book by Leopold (1949) contains the least number of similes in the corpus, based on Table 1. The most recurring category in the source domains is human and human body parts at 30%. In the target domain, the most frequent category is animal and animal body parts at 36%. For the most part, the author's attention is focused on the humans, animals, and the world of plants in both domains. Having a highly ethical regard for America's relationship to the land in addition to wildlife conservation, Leopold (1949) uses similes to give depth and intelligence to the animals and plants he writes about so that they are imbued with the same importance, liveliness, and intricacy as any human character.

Leopold's (1949) recognition of the existence of an active agency in the wildlife and humans' interconnectedness with the surrounding world are reflected in his novel use of nature similes. His ecological viewpoint rests upon the equal intrinsic worth of all living beings, which also forms the foundation of his land ethic, which "simply

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enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land” (Leopold, 1949, p. 173).

Examples for the source domain:

- (1) The male woodcock, while doing his peenting prologue to the sky dance, is like a short lady in high heels.
- (2) Like other artists, my river is temperamental; there is no predicting when the mood to paint will come upon him, or how long it will last.

Examples for the target domain:

- (3) Doves and quail fluttered over this banquet like fruit-flies over a ripe banana.
- (4) A rough-legged hawk comes sailing over the meadow ahead. Now he stops, hovers like a kingfisher.

Table 1 The result of the simile analysis of *A Sand County Almanac*

Domain Categories	Source	Target
Human and human body parts	15 (30)	11 (22)
Trees, plants, flowers, and their parts	9 (18)	8 (16)
Animal and animal body parts	11 (22)	18 (36)
Natural elements	1 (2)	2 (4)
Weather	1 (2)	–
Light and darkness	–	–
Landforms	4 (8)	3 (6)
Heavenly bodies	1 (2)	–
Objects	5 (10)	1 (2)
Technology	1 (2)	–
Buildings, roads, and constructions	–	2 (4)
Food and drink	–	–
Seasons, time, and occasions	–	–
Abstract concepts	2 (4)	2 (4)
Language, science, and art	–	3 (6)
Total	50 (100)	50 (100)

Abram (2010) mainly resorts to objects and, then, animals for the source domain, with percentages of 18.4 and 16.7 respectively. The categories on humans and abstract concepts are the frequent ones with regard to the target domain with percentages of 28.1 and 14, according to Table 2. He views the world from a multisensorial perspective and believes that the ultimate source of carnal knowledge is the thoughtful human body. Moreover, the use of similes in *Becoming Animal* is

indicative of the author's conceptualization of nature as a complex and layered interplay of the human life with that of non-human.

As a contemporary American nature writer, Abram (2010) does not show direct and complete influence from the earlier American writer Leopold (1949) by often resorting to objects and abstract concepts in his use of similes. Sensuous natural science and multi-sensory ecology fascinates Abram (2010) and, thus, are reflected in his use of similes in particular when he resorts to abstract concepts for the second domain.

The sensitivity to the multiple layers of perception upon the world is evident in the language of Abram's (2010) poetic prose. To him, everything is alive and has intelligence or awareness. Everything has a mind. Correspondingly, body has a mind. The commonly held view is that the mind is located in the brain. However, Ackerman (1990, p. xix) asserts that the mind "travels the whole body in caravans of hormone and enzyme, busily making sense of the catalogue of wonders we call touch, taste, smell, hearing, vision". The attention to multisensorial immersion of human beings in the more-than-human terrain is inexhaustibly worked into the language of Abram (2010).

Examples for the source domain:

- (5) We've lost hearing in one ear; the other rings like a fallen spoon.
- (6) The rest of our planet spins, like a slowly wobbling top, around that stable center.
- (7) A grove of whispering aspens—tall, sun-dappled trunks like elegant giraffe necks.
- (8) The sun is now perched, like a kingfisher, upon the high ridge of the mountain

Examples for the target domain:

- (9) I stand at dawn in his yard, patient and still like the trees across the road.
- (10) My feet are like ears listening downward.
- (11) Some vital ideas were like creatures wholly unaccustomed to human contact.
- (12) Certain ideas were like deer, visiting our awareness in much the same way that wild deer make contact with us.

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Table 2 The result of the simile analysis of *Becoming Animal*

Domain Categories	Source	Target
Human and human body parts	12 (10.5)	32 (28.1)
Trees, plants, flowers, and their parts	14 (12.3)	4 (3.5)
Animal and animal body parts	19 (16.7)	10 (8.8)
Natural elements	1 (0.9)	3 (2.6)
Weather	5 (4.4)	11 (9.6)
Light and darkness	–	7 (6.1)
Landforms	15 (13.2)	9 (7.9)
Heavenly bodies	5 (4.4)	7 (6.1)
Objects	21 (18.4)	1 (0.9)
Technology	4 (3.5)	2 (1.8)
Buildings, roads, and constructions	2 (1.8)	1 (0.9)
Food and drink	2 (1.8)	–
Seasons, time, and occasions	–	1 (0.9)
Abstract concepts	8 (7)	16 (14)
Language, science, and art	6 (5.3)	10 (8.8)
Total	114 (100)	114(100)

The Table 3 shows that objects, animals and plants are the recurring source domain categories in the book by Shepherd (1977). Landforms, animals, and plants often occur for the second conceptual domain. The nature similes in the book encapsulate the wide range of multisensorial engagements with the flora and fauna amassed over years of exploring the Cairngorms.

As a unique mountain literature, the book is not obsessed with reaching the summit but walking in the mountain. It is through the constant wandering in the mountain

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that the author weaves nature similes, which revolve around the natural inhabitants of the mountain and imply her tactile and evocative obsession with its wild life.

Examples for the source domain:

(13) Moths like oiled paper

(14) Normally deer are silent creatures, but when alarmed they bark like an angry dog

(15) Especially the roes, the very young ones, dappled, with limbs like the stalks of flowers

Examples for the target domain:

(16) Far off, another peak lifts like a small island from the smother.

(17) A young squirrel, caught upon his own occasions, will behave like the young fawn.

(18) Bog asphodel like candle flame.

Table 3 The result of the simile analysis of *The Living Mountain*

Domain Categories	Source	Target
Human and human body parts	10 (10.1)	10 (10.1)
Trees, plants, flowers, and their parts	12 (12.1)	19 (19.2)
Animal and animal body parts	14 (14.1)	20 (20.2)
Natural elements	5 (5.1)	12 (12.1)
Weather	5 (5.1)	6 (6.1)
Light and darkness	3 (3)	3 (3)
Landforms	10 (10.1)	22 (22.2)
Heavenly bodies	3 (3)	–
Objects	15 (15.2)	–
Technology	1 (1)	1 (1)
Buildings, roads, and constructions	2 (2)	1 (1)
Food and drink	8 (8.1)	–
Seasons, time, and occasions	1 (1)	3 (3)
Abstract concepts	5 (5.1)	2 (2)
Language, science, and art	5 (5.1)	–
Total	99 (100)	99(100)

Jamie’s (2012) *Sightlines* is the only book in the corpus that heavily relies on similes for nature description, as Table 4 presents. Objects, animals, and human beings appear a lot in the source domain, with percentages of 20.4, 19.7, and 17.7. The other conceptual domain is largely allocated to animals, humans, and landforms at 32.7%, 20.4%, and 17% respectively. Interestingly, the common occurrence of objects and technology in the source domain can be justified by the concern for what Iovino (2012, p. 66) calls “agential kinships” in the material world. The expression propagates the recognition that non-human matter has agency, vitality, and power.

Put differently, this use of similes can be attributed to the author's attention to her embodied immersion in the material world. The interconnection between material substances of all types is the imagery that is evoked by such similes. The material kinship and connection is the main message the book intends to deliver.

The findings suggest that the contemporary Scottish Jamie (2012) shows heavy influence from Shepherd (1977), another Scottish writer. Both writers take into account objects for the source domain. Anyway, Jamie (2012) goes one step further by constantly referring to technology in a nature book. Her similes function like a hinge that freshly connects nature and technology in addition to past and present.

Jamie's (2012) essays are about sites where nature and non-nature intersect, the result of which is the rejection of idealization and externalization of nature. Such viewpoints are mirrored in her discourse that embraces not only the presence of the lyricist as 'I' but also the inclusion of multiple voices. The people, the places and their history are brought into relation by Jamie's (2012) discourse. Her ecological, social, and historical sensitivities altogether unwind the wild lands.

Examples for the source domain:

(19) The great whales' pelvic bones, which were small and delicate, like paper boats.

(20) All over the hill, too—lumps and bumps on the upper slopes, like buttons holding down the land against the wind.

(21) Six or seven very dark oval dots, still tiny, despite the magnification, were ranged across the blue valley, like musk oxen on tundra, seen from far above.

(22) Like vast oxen yoked together to haul the most terrible plough, are the jaws of two great baleen whales.

(23) I like to watch lone gannets interrogating the sea, like some old patrician poet frowning over his papers.

(24) Slender and pale, the jaw's sides rise like the arms of a ballet dancer.

Examples for the target domain:

(25) A blue whale within its confines was somewhat of a puzzle, like a ship in a bottle.

(26) Then, with these four animals below us, we heard them blow—all synchronised, a sound low, regular and industrial, like a Victorian machine.

(27) We're like cats, always on the wrong side of every door, meeting each other always at the doors.

(28) Just for fun, we won't have to navigate ourselves home like the old whalers by stars and sextants, or indeed by raven.

(29) Two stones jutted up from the wall-head like praying hands.

(30) It has one fertile hill, and two flat near-barren peninsulas, one pointing north, one southwest, like two mismatching wings.

Table 4 The result of the simile analysis of *Sightlines*

Domain Categories	Source	Target
Human and human body parts	26 (17.7)	30 (20.4)
Trees, plants, flowers, and their parts	6 (4.1)	1 (0.7)
Animal and animal body parts	29 (19.7)	48 (32.7)
Natural elements	2 (1.4)	2 (1.4)
Weather	2 (1.4)	2 (1.4)
Light and darkness	1 (0.7)	6 (4.1)
Landforms	5 (3.4)	25 (17)
Heavenly bodies	2 (1.4)	6 (4.1)
Objects	30 (20.4)	3 (2)
Technology	13 (8.8)	2 (1.4)
Buildings, roads, and constructions	8 (5.4)	6 (4.1)
Food and drink	3 (2)	–
Seasons, time, and occasions	–	1 (0.7)
Abstract concepts	10 (6.8)	9 (6.1)
Language, science, and art	10 (6.8)	6 (4.1)
Total	147 (100)	147 (100)

6. Conclusion

Concerning a style of writing that embraces embodiment coupled with material agency in their creative choice of simile, the ideological intentions of Abram (2010) and Jamie (2012), to a great extent, and Leopold (1949) and Shepherd (1977), to a lesser extent, are in line with new materialisms. Being eco-friendly, this intellectual movement gives special attention to the “ethical and political possibilities” that “emerge from the literal contact zone between human corporeality and more-than-

human nature” (ALAIMO, 2010). Most notably, it is characterized by a particular interest in the “ultimately unmappable landscapes of interacting biological, climatic, economic, and political forces” (ALAIMO, 2010).

The fact that matter is alive, agentic, and sentient is at the core of new materialism. The idea of material agency entails that the matter can produce its own meaning and become a text that can be open to a critical analysis in order to explore its lyricism. It is discernable in such “material productivity a posthumanist sense of material agency and a limitation of humans’ agentic efficacy” (COOLE & FROST, p. 14). In other words, inorganic phenomena possess a certain effectiveness that may go beyond human will.

Matter surrounds us in the same way as a language surrounds us. This means that matter dominates everyday lives. It must be recognized that humans’ material practices and exploitation of nature can have positive and negative consequences. Hence, the representation and positioning of nonhuman agentic capacities in multimodal texts should be seriously studied.

The poetic, descriptive discourses of the authors signify their ecocentric or environment-centered mind style. The theocentric and anthropocentric world views which include domination are abandoned to reject and subvert the Great Chain of Being, given its internal hierarchy. The ecocentric mind style is in line with the term deep ecology invented by Naess (1973) who blames European and North American civilization for the arrogance of its human-centered instrumentalization of nonhuman nature. Apparently, deep ecology advocates the inherent worth of the more-than-human cosmos along with human beings and supports the spread of this viewpoint for restructuring eco-social lives.

Lazar (2003) is of the opinion that teaching figurative language is of great significance for it can help language learners expand their vocabulary. Besides, figurative language acts as a potential way for organizing the vocabulary to be learned and this organization where vocabulary items are grouped based on the topic is called a lexical set. These lexical sets can be extended to arrive at the so-called metaphorical sets. Thanks to these sets, teachers aid in students’ efficient and quick memorization of new words.

Culture's impact on figurative language learning cannot be neglected. Hence, teachers must familiarize students with "cultural meanings inherent in many examples of figurative language in English, while encouraging them to compare these associations with those in their mother tongue" (LAZAR, 2004, p. 2). It will be beneficial if teachers tell learners that similes range from conventional similes recorded in dictionaries to novel and poetic ones created by the narrator or lyricist. In writing, language learners should be encouraged to write about nature and simultaneously practice the use of creative similes that appropriately fit the ecological context.

7. Suggestions for Further Research

Valuable research can be carried out on a large variety of nature books rather than limiting the investigation to award-winning and reputable ones.

The translation of similes can be complex and problematic. A future study may provide an account of nature-related similes in translation from English to other languages and vice versa. A close look into similes will also indicate to what extent the linguistic fauna and flora is revealing of the eco-cultural landscape of the writer or translator.

A similar study can be conducted on nature books written in other languages and in order to compare the findings with the results of the current study.

Given the current ecological crisis, image-centric texts like illustrated children's literature are in need of a similar simile analysis to investigate nature representation. Further research should explore nature similes across multiple literary genres such as short stories, poems, and scientific news. Definitely, this kind of exploration can invigorate research on ecolinguistics.

The interpretation of nature-related similes can be a valuable research topic. The researcher may consider the differences and similarities in the understanding of nature-related similes among children and adult EFL students.

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