

## **RAISING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS - LITERALLY: PROFILING THE ROLE OF METAPHOR TO INDUCE AUDIENCE**

---

**Stephen Markve**

Qatar University, Qatar

---

Language teachers have recurring challenges, not the least of which is developing students' writing skills and the audience awareness that writers depend on. When our students are writing across languages and cultures the challenge is amplified, though through its saliency it may be all the more 'harnessable.' The field of Composition is to a large degree founded on Rhetoric, an art of discourse which has long recognized the essential role of the audience and the value of metaphor. Unfortunately, metaphor is often treated as an appendage to a final communicative product, its productive quality being overlooked. Recent research done by linguists has, however, demonstrated that the trope's epistemic role is formidable. Showing our writing students 'how metaphor works' by using models developed by linguists (e.g. Turner and Fauconnier) working within the framework of Blending Theory (BT), can lead them to better understand the power of metaphor, develop an awareness of how they work (in both L1 and L2), and lead to insights into how to write for their audience. In this presentation I will discuss BT's approach to metaphor and provide examples of how I have incorporated it into a 1st year university essay writing course for non-native English speakers. I will illustrate how I raise students' awareness of the ubiquity of metaphor and demonstrate that metaphor's inherently absurd/illogical nature behooves them to imagine what an audience would need to know to understand their metaphors. By using BT to analyze the (posited) mechanics of metaphor, I bring students to question their assumptions about their audience and in doing so, ask themselves how they can better and more imaginatively involve their audience and write for them as they craft their arguments with a heightened awareness of the figurative nature of language.