

# JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

---

---

## The Power to Move the Eiffel Tower: Conceptual Metaphor and Persuasion in L2 Argumentative Writing

Chin Chiu Jin<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Learning Institute for Empowerment, Multimedia University, Melaka, Malaysia

\*Corresponding author: [cjchin@mmu.edu.my](mailto:cjchin@mmu.edu.my); ORCID iD: 0000-0003-4628-6406

### ABSTRACT

This article analyses conceptual metaphors produced in argumentative writing by learners of English as a second language (L2). Founded on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, it explores the linguistic metaphorical expressions which reflect an underlying conceptual metaphor. By drawing on Critical Metaphor Analysis, this research adopts a qualitative approach to analysing the concealed motivations behind a conceptual metaphor use. The data of this study comprise five argumentative essay samples collected from foundation year students at a private university in Malaysia. This study reveals how a conceptual metaphor is evoked to frame an argument in a way that is advantageous to the participants, particularly in establishing their stance on the proposition that social media is advantageous rather than disadvantageous to its users. Seven conceptual metaphors identified from the five samples of writing are related to social media, namely global mass gathering, loudspeaker, free society, accommodation, teacher, strong force and maze. While the first six metaphors serve as rhetorical tools to aid the participants in establishing arguments, the last metaphor is raised in the counterclaim section to illustrate how the opposition could equally rely on conceptual metaphors to establish its viewpoint. In instances where the metaphors are deployed as rhetorical devices, the participants' covert intention to convince readers of their standpoint is achieved by utilising the conceptual metaphors to illuminate abstract ideas, arouse positive or negative emotions in readers, indicate positive or negative evaluations and evoke an ideology.

**Keywords:** metaphor in academic writing, conceptual metaphor, critical metaphor analysis, L2 argumentative writing, metaphors for social media

**Received:** 21 March 2024, **Accepted:** 14 June 2024, **Published:** 31 July 2024

### Introduction

Metaphor, a figure of speech which expresses non-literal meanings, is a salient feature in literary texts such as poetry, short stories, plays and novels, constituting creative, intriguing and vivid expressions. In non-literary texts, metaphors are devices for illustrating abstract and complex ideas, offering the reader a clear and concrete understanding of circumstances which would be otherwise obscure or less effectively expressed in non-metaphoric language. These metaphors also empower speakers and writers with rhetoric, a persuasive advantage in persuasive speeches or texts as the art of persuasion. When articulating emotions, speakers or writers rely on metaphoric expressions to project a sharpened understanding of the feelings experienced. These are some examples of circumstances where metaphor is deployed to play its role.

In academic writing, learners often need to articulate thoughts, express meanings and reflect on issues. Illustrating and explaining ideas as well as persuading readers, particularly in argumentative writing, are central writing practices. These practices require the creation of metaphors when a writing task is executed, primarily when the task demands engagement with complicated issues. In argumentative writing, metaphorical thinking plays a highly significant role among learners in building arguments and persuading readers of their standpoint. Similarly, the production of metaphors for persuasion in argumentative writing is crucial to learners who learn English as a second language (L2).

According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), upon which the framework of this study is founded, metaphors are not merely linguistic devices that adorn literary works with poetic expressions, but they also structure our thinking. They are meaning making devices that allow us to depict our world in a meaningful way. Lakoff and Johnson's theory suggests that metaphors are part of our consciousness, and we rely on metaphors to understand how realities in our world work. Since conceptualising ideas is fundamental in a writing process, metaphorical language can be applied by L2 learners to express their thoughts, and this often occurs with their realisation (Lu, 2021).

The relevant studies, which will be discussed in the literature review section, explored several aspects of metaphor use in academic writing. Those aspects principally centre around the ubiquitous presence of metaphor in English learners' writing, their metaphor production, the relationship between metaphor production and language proficiency as well as the functions of metaphor in academic writing. Nevertheless, the creation of metaphor in argumentative writing by Malaysian L2 learners remains unexplored. Furthermore, a magnified and focused analysis, specifically on how conceptual metaphors aid L2 learners in building arguments, establishing a viewpoint and achieving the ultimate goal of persuasion has not been attempted. An in-depth analysis on these two aspects will, therefore, be a meaningful addition to the existing reservoir of literature on metaphor production and use in L2 argumentative writing. Hence, two research objectives are outlined in this study:

1. To explore the conceptual metaphors produced in argumentative writing by Malaysian L2 learners
2. To examine how such conceptual metaphors are utilised for persuasion in argumentative writing

## **Literature Review**

### ***Metaphor***

Defining metaphor is, by no means, straightforward. Aristotle regarded metaphors as ornamental expressions to provide attractiveness and style to language, and metaphor uses one thing to name another thing (Aristotle, as cited in Charteris-Black, 2014). In other words, Aristotle viewed it as a figure of speech which states something in a non-literal sense. "The sun was a toddler", "Her heart was a secret garden" and "Men's words are bullets" are some of the classic literary metaphors which resonate profoundly with readers and fertilise their imagination.

Nevertheless, in recent decades, metaphors have been seen as meaning making tools (Redden, 2017). It has been defined as "substituting one word for another word with an apparently different meaning, comparing one idea to another, or creating an implicit analogy or simile" (Ritchie, 2013, p. 4). According to Kövecses (2010), metaphor is a "figure of speech in which one thing is compared to another by saying that one is the other", and "He is a lion" is an example given (p. ix).

The definitions of metaphor in literature are mainly demarcated by the understanding before and after the development of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980. The understanding of metaphor prior to CMT was a "traditional concept" (Kövecses, 2010, p. ix). Its crucial properties include the following: it is a linguistic phenomenon used artistically and rhetorically, and it is not an inescapable part of our everyday communication. In their book *Metaphors we live by*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) changed the profoundly ingrained understanding of metaphor by suggesting that metaphor is a phenomenon of thinking instead of being purely linguistic expressions, and metaphor is

produced in our everyday communication (Kövecses, 2010), “structuring, restricting and even creating reality” (Kövecses, 2017, p. 13).

With a more all-round way of defining metaphor, Charteris-Black (2004) explains metaphor from three perspectives: linguistic, pragmatic and cognitive criteria. Linguistically, a metaphor includes reification (using something concrete to refer to something abstract), personification (using something animate to refer to something inanimate) and depersonification (using something inanimate to refer to something animate). Pragmatically, “a metaphor is an incongruous linguistic representation that has the underlying purpose of influencing opinions and judgments by persuasion; this purpose is often covert and reflects the speaker's intentions within particular contexts of use” (p. 21). Cognitively, he views a metaphor as the result of “a shift in the conceptual system” which is based on “the association between the attributes of the referent of a linguistic expression in its original source context and those of the referent in its novel target context” (p. 21). Combining the three perspectives, he defines metaphor as a linguistic expression caused by the change in the use of a word or phrase from an expected context or domain of its occurrence to an unexpected context or domain of its occurrence, resulting in “semantic tension” (p. 21). The idea of semantic tension will be further elaborated in the research methodology section.

### *Conventional and Novel Metaphors*

Metaphors can be understood based on how conventional or how novel they are. Newly created metaphors, or novel metaphors, as opposed to conventional metaphors, offer new perspectives of understanding our experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) also acknowledge that the attractiveness of these creative metaphors lies in their ability of producing new ways of viewing the reality instead of merely preserving the existing way of conceptualising the world. On the other hand, conventional metaphors are established within a language community and require less cognitive effort to understand them, or they are the ones which can be readily or obviously identified (Charteris-Black, 2004). While conventional metaphors are instrumental in enabling language users to conveniently deploy these familiar metaphors in a way beneficial to them, new metaphors stretch the conceptualisation of the reality to include new meanings.

Kövecses (2010) uses the term “conventionality” and understands the term “conventional” as “well established and well entrenched in the usage of a linguistic community” (p. 34). Using “the scale of conventionality” (p. 35), he describes conventionality as a continuum, and therefore, at the opposite end of highly conventional metaphors are highly unconventional or novel metaphors, which cannot be found in dictionaries or in everyday communication. In Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) definition, conventional metaphors are “metaphors that structure the ordinary conceptual system of our culture, which is reflected in our everyday language” (p. 139).

Conversely, novel metaphors are related to creativity. “The notion of creativity is thus a complex aspect of metaphor, related to our personality and cognition (including our emotions and imagination)” (Ahlgren et al., 2021, p. 198). It is also related to “the cultural and linguistic context in which the figurative expressions are embedded” (Kohl et al., 2020, p. 29). New metaphors are also understood as “novel, vivid, innovative, poetical, creative or living metaphors” (Ahlgren et al., 2021, p.198) vis-à-vis conventional metaphors which are pervasively used that people may often overlook them as metaphors (Ahlgren et al., 2021).

In terms of how we identify these two types of metaphor, Charteris-Black (2004) suggests that other than referring to a language corpus when identifying conventional metaphors, these metaphors may be found arbitrary in dictionary sources. In a study, Nacey (2009) identified novel metaphors as “linguistic metaphors whose contextual meanings are not lexicalised as entries in standard dictionaries” (p. 1), implying that conventional metaphors are codified in dictionary sources. Adding to all these explanations, Maudslay and Teufel (2022) proposed viewing novel metaphors as “creative expressions made in a particular situation by one particular individual” and conventional metaphors as “those which have been widely adopted by a language community” (p. 65). While novel metaphors are “creative usages of words” (p. 65), conventional metaphors are lexicalised.

### ***Functions of Metaphors***

In Rhetoric, Aristotle stated that metaphor is often more effective and persuasive than literal expressions (Cuccio, 2016). Aristotle also considered metaphor a rhetorical tool to convince others to accept a certain viewpoint (Evans & Green, 2018). Metaphor can be influential in convincing others to subscribe to a particular viewpoint because it can “emphasise or deemphasise” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 10) certain elements of a subject matter. Hence, it is typically for persuasion because it offers a different perception of the world with new insight, and it is frequently deployed for rhetorical and argumentative purposes (Charteris-Black, 2004). Metaphors are also communication tools to reinforce the persuasiveness of communication (Boeynaems et al., 2017; Ervas et al., 2018). In addition, Charteris-Black (2014) asserts that metaphor is strongly persuasive in influencing “our intellectual and emotional responses by evaluating actions, actors and issues” (p.160), and this influence can be exerted through either novel, poetic or creative metaphors or conventional or familiar metaphors. All these views confirm the role of metaphor in argumentation and persuasion.

Aside from the primary rhetorical and argumentative purposes, Goatly (2011) lists three major functions of metaphor: the ideational (e.g. giving explanations and modelling in understanding abstract concepts), interpersonal (e.g. establishing argument by analogy, persuading and influencing judgements), and textual (e.g. providing textual coherence, developing and structuring texts). More recently, Charteris-Black (2014) proposed seven purposes of metaphor commonly found in political speeches, namely earning trust, simplifying issues to comprehensible ones, implying evaluations of issues in order to establish an argument, triggering emotions that are favourable to the speaker, forming coherence in texts, representing issues through an ideology and providing narrative-based representations so that they create a myth.

While Goatly (2011) establishes three different functions of metaphor, Charteris-Black’s (2014) seven purposes of metaphor “interact dynamically with each other” (p. 200) as rhetorical means to attain the final goal of persuasion. Despite the different approaches to explaining the functions of metaphor, they share more or less similar views on the main roles of metaphor. However, Charteris-Black’s (2014) seven purposeful uses of metaphor outline more comprehensive rhetorical means for persuasion. Since argumentative writing is founded upon establishing a stance as well as convincing readers of the stance, it shares common underlying motivations with those of a political speech. On this basis, the relevant purposes listed by Charteris-Black above are applied in the present analysis.

### ***Metaphors and Academic Writing among English Learners***

The use of metaphor in academic texts has been a subject of interest in multiple studies. Metaphor has been proved to be ubiquitous in academic writing (Herrmann, 2013; Hoàng, 2015; Hoang & Boers, 2018; Nacey, 2020). Herrmann’s (2013) study highlighted the more frequent use of metaphors in academic prose than in the other three forms of texts (news texts, fiction, and conversation), noting that metaphors are important in highly precise and abstract academic texts to give a clear description in abstract instances, convey messages, give explanations, establish the writer’s stance and persuade readers. In a study analysing the frequency of metaphor types in medical articles written by both native and non-native speakers of English, the use of metaphor was found to be relatively stable in both groups of English speakers (Saneie Moghadam & Ghafar Samar, 2020).

Studies also established the connection between the density of metaphor use and language proficiency. Littlemore et al. (2013) explored metaphors applied by language learners in 200 essays written by Greek and German learners of English at all Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels. The results showed increasing density of metaphors from the lowest to the highest CEFR level, signifying that metaphor production among L2 learners is indicative of their language proficiency, and appropriate metaphor use contributes to a language learner’s communicative competence. In addition, Littlemore et al. (2013) recommended that metaphor use be included as a descriptor in each level of the CEFR. Hoàng (2015) who analysed metaphorical language in 396 L2 learners’ essays concluded that metaphorical language use among the learners correlated with writing grades. Similarly,

when investigating whether higher-proficiency learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) employed a higher density of metaphors in their expository writing in comparison with lower-proficiency learners, Hoang and Boers (2018) found a positive link between density of metaphorical expressions and language proficiency of 257 undergraduate English majors at three different levels at a university in Vietnam. Yang (2022) also reported a positive correlation between students' writing proficiency and competence in metaphor use.

In terms of academic writing for L2 or EFL, research related to metaphor has revolved around metaphor production. A corpus-based study was carried out by Nacey (2013) to compare the metaphors produced in argumentative writing by adult first language speakers of English (L1) with those produced by Norwegian adult L2 English speakers, and results showed the ubiquity of metaphor in both groups of speakers. The same research reported that L2 learners created more metaphors than L1 speakers, and while both groups mainly created conventional metaphors which had been incorporated in dictionaries, L2 learners evoked more novel metaphors. In Nacey's (2020) study, 22 written texts produced by students with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds in Norway were analysed. The participants interpreted a literary metaphor in a Norwegian poem and incorporated it in writing about their own lives, and the findings proved the pervasive metaphor use in their writing.

The roles or functions of metaphor in L2 academic writing have also been researched into by several researchers. Hoàng (2015) proposed the incorporation of metaphorical vocabulary, which is crucial in producing impactful expressions and vividness in writing, into the writing lesson for L2 learners. In several other studies, it was found that in L2 argumentative writing, metaphor empowers writers with expression and persuasion (Hoang & Boers, 2018; Littlemore et al., 2013; Lu, 2021; Nacey, 2013). In another study, Nacey (2019) who explored the development of metaphorical production among Norwegian L2 English learners reported that metaphors were used to enhance the persuasiveness of an argument and link subject knowledge with the topic. Studying the use and communicative functions of extended metaphors in L2 argumentative essays by Chinese university students, Lu (2021) found that L2 learners produced extended metaphors to create vivid, coherent, comprehensible, evaluative and persuasive ideas.

Apart from the all the crucial functions of metaphor above, the importance of metaphor to L2 learners is also affirmed in other studies. Analysing the metaphoric language of 12 essays written by L2 learners from South Africa, Postma (2015) discovered successful production of metaphors by the learners in expressing their viewpoints despite their weak language ability and limited command of vocabulary, and the metaphors they produced reflected their ability to narrate their worlds. Nguyen (2019) who investigated the effects of using metaphor in writing among English major students in Vietnam concluded that learners who used metaphors in their writing obtained better scores.

### ***Metaphors for Social Media***

Reviewing the literature on metaphors for social media is relevant in this study because the argumentative writing task assigned to the participants centres around social media. Nevertheless, research on the production of metaphors to visualise social media has been quite limited. To aid L2 language instructors and content designers to envisage the dynamics of social media for the purposes of enhancing the learning experience and illustrating the value of social media to learners, Reinhardt (2020) listed four metaphors, namely "windows", "mirrors", "doorways" and "playgrounds". Through the "window" metaphor, learners can observe how native speakers interact and socialise through the "window" of social media. The "mirror" metaphor can be produced to allow learners to view social media as a mirror as they can see themselves through the identities they construct in their personal profiles. Social media can also be illustrated as a "doorway" to access the cultural and intercultural practices, while the "playground" metaphor captures the role of social media in providing space for learners to learn and play.

In le Roux and Parry's (2020) study about the behaviour of social media use and social media's roles for users, four metaphors were drawn to deliberate these two aspects. The metaphors consisted of "social

media as a town square” which implies users’ central attention on social media, “social media as a beauty pageant” which draws attention to self-representation, comparison and evaluation carried out on social media, “social media as a parliament” which emphasises on social media’s role in providing online discussion spaces, and “social media as a masquerade ball” which points to the possibilities of anonymity and deceptive self-representation. The researchers argued that these metaphors act as powerful pedagogical and communication tools.

However, both studies above did not involve systematic analyses of metaphor. As emphasised by le Roux and Parry (2020), the main approach taken in the study was utilising the metaphors to explicate complex aspects apart from creating vivid descriptions about social media. Instead of engaging a qualitative method to analyse how the metaphors were derived, the main focus of both studies was to illuminate the nature, value and dynamics of social media, drawing on the vivid ideas conjured up by the suggested metaphors.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### ***Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)***

The analysis of the metaphors produced by L2 learners in their argumentative writing in the current study is founded upon the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which is a cognitive approach to exploring metaphors in texts or discourse. In CMT, our conceptual system, which concerns our thought and action, is metaphorical, hence playing an influential role in our everyday communication, and metaphors govern how we conceptualise our experience, problems and emotions (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

The crucial elements of CMT are summarised below:

1. Different linguistic metaphors can reflect one conceptual metaphor. For instance, the conceptual metaphor THE MIND IS A MACHINE is reflected by several metaphoric expressions such as “*My mind is not operating today*”, “*I am a little rusty today*” and “*We are running out of steam*” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 27).
2. A conceptual metaphor comprises two conceptual domains, and one domain, which is the target domain, is comprehended in terms of the other domain, which is the source domain (Kövecses, 2010). For example, in the conceptual metaphor TIME IS MONEY (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 7), TIME which is the target domain is understood in terms of MONEY as the source domain.
3. Metaphor is viewed as the mapping from a familiar or concrete source domain to a less familiar or abstract target domain, and this mapping is based on the correspondences of our experience in these two domains. For instance, the conceptual metaphor “LOVE IS A JOURNEY” is founded on correspondences between love and journey, lovers and travellers, managing a love relationship and dealing with a travel as well as challenges in the relationship and obstacles during the travel. Metaphoric expressions such as “*We are at a crossroads in our relationship*”, “*Love is a two-way street*”, and “*We may have to go our separate ways*” are metaphoric expressions that can be grouped under this conceptual metaphor (McGlone, 2007). In this example, the three very different metaphoric expressions capture the aspects of the concept of love through another concept, which is journey.
4. Conceptual mappings are generally selective and partial, mapping only certain aspects of the source and the target while hiding others (Kövecses, 2010).

## **Methods**

### ***Participants***

Six participants voluntarily participated in the argumentative writing task in this study. The six participants, who were foundation year students, were from the batch of the third trimester, academic year 2022/2023, Multimedia University Malaysia. Aged between 19 and 20, they were the Generation Z members who were born between 1995 and 2009. This generation is often labelled as “i-Generation, Gen Tech, Online Generation, Post Millennials, Facebook Generation” (Dolot, 2018, p. 3). They were brought up in the 2000s in a world with blossoming digital developments, digital networks, digital media, and inventions of gadgets such as smart phones and laptops. Besides, social networking is an integral activity in their lives (Singh & Dangmei, 2016). Technology also shapes their identity, and they are tech-savvy (Coombs, as cited in Singh & Dangmei, 2016). Generation Z also exemplifies the ability to live and function in both the physical and the virtual worlds, in addition to being capable of switching between these two realms (Żarczyńska-Dobiesz & Chomałowska, as cited in Dolot, 2018). All these characteristics of Generation Z provide a glimpse into the social background of the participants and offer clues about their conceptualisation of social media through a metaphoric lens.

### ***Data Collection***

The data of this study comprise five argumentative essay samples collected from the six participants. One incomplete sample was excluded. There are two primary reasons why argumentative writing is selected in exploring the use of metaphors. Firstly, argumentative topics are more reflective and abstract by nature (Littlemore et al., 2013; Lu, 2021). Some topics motivates more use of metaphors (Nacey, 2020). Secondly, metaphors are important argumentative and rhetorical strategies used in argumentation (Littlemore et al., 2013). Additionally, in this study, argumentative writing was assigned because it was part of the writing skills taught in the third trimester of a foundation academic year. Hence, it was a writing process the participants were familiar with and thus would not hamper their writing process.

To explore the use of conceptual metaphors by the participants in addressing the same issue, the same topic was assigned to them, which was “Social media brings more advantages than disadvantages”. Participants were allotted 60 minutes to compose an argumentative essay of 350 to 400 words in the classroom in the typewritten form. At the end of the duration, the participants posted their essay in Google Classroom.

Instead of instructing students to assign metaphors to their ideas through the elicitation approach, which would otherwise defeat the primary research purpose of examining the production of metaphors as part of the cognitive process, this study adopted an idiographic approach. This method, which inductively examines metaphors used spontaneously or naturally in texts, is believed to be the most fruitful way of generating metaphors (Redden, 2017). In this metaphor production approach, the participants were not purposefully prompted to use metaphors in their writing. This data collection method is in line with a clear notion that metaphors are omnipresent in texts produced naturally and spontaneously (Deignan, 2012; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

The participants composed their essay in the following structure:

1. Introduction: Introduce the proposition and state the thesis statement.
2. Arguments: Discuss grounds for the proposition and thesis.
3. Concession and Refutation: Include the counterclaim and rebuttal.
4. Conclusion: Conclude the discussion and affirm the validity of the proposition and thesis.

### ***Data Analysis***

This study analyses metaphors in the samples qualitatively. According to Redden (2017, p. 1), “Metaphors, which are figures of speech used to compare one thing to another, signal more complex meaning making and thus can be useful as a means of qualitative data collection and analysis”. Metaphor analysis, as a qualitative approach, facilitates researchers to unmask concealed intentions and

meanings, and when metaphors are spontaneously applied, researchers are able to probe participants' perspective or viewpoint (Redden, 2017).

### ***Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA)***

Charteris-Black (2004) offers a detailed explanation on Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA), which is argued as a key component of critical discourse analysis (CDA). "CMA is a way of revealing underlying ideologies, attitudes and beliefs, and therefore constitute a vital means of understanding more about the complex relationships between language, thought and social context" (p. 42).

More importantly, Charteris-Black's (2004) CMA aligns with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) CMT in upholding the primary tenet: metaphors are phenomena of our thinking process. Based on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) cognitive semantic approach towards metaphors, Charteris-Black complemented it with pragmatics. It is in fact the "underlying utterance meaning, as determined by speaker intention, that is central in understanding what metaphor is" (Charteris-Black, 2004, pp. 10-11). Integrating the cognitive, semantic and pragmatic perspectives in analysing metaphors, Charteris-Black's (2004) CMA empowers researchers with a powerful instrument to analyse the underlying motivation, ideology, purpose, attitude, belief, intention or value behind metaphors in various types of text and discourse.

Utilising CMA suggested by Charteris-Black (2004), metaphor analysis of this study was performed in three stages: identification, interpretation and explanation.

### ***Metaphor Identification***

In Charteris-Black's (2004) metaphor identification, two stages are involved. The first stage is going through the text closely to identify "metaphor keyword", a word or phrase that causes "semantic tension" or "incongruity" (p. 21), meaning that there is an abnormal use of a word or phrase in the context where it occurs. A word or a phrase that causes semantic tension and is defined as metaphor includes "reification", "personification" and "depersonification" (p. 21). The second stage is another qualitative stage where the metaphor keywords are examined in their contexts to determine whether they are metaphors or non-metaphors.

In addition to the detection of semantic tension, metaphor identification procedure (MIP) created by the Pragglejaz Group (2007) was also applied in metaphor identification in the current study. MIP allows the use of dictionaries to detect "metaphor word" by examining each word's basic meaning in contrast to the contextual meaning to determine whether a word is metaphor or otherwise, thus reducing intuition and subjectivity. In this way, MIP also served to confirm the "metaphor keywords" identified through the detection of semantic tension in this study.

MIP suggests the following:

- i. Break down the relevant text into lexical units or word by word. In deciding the divisions of lexical units, the key criterion used by the Pragglejaz Group (2007) is "decomposability" (p. 26). This denotes that if a multiword unit can be analysed through the meaning of every single word, then each component word is considered as a lexical unit; if it can only be comprehended as a whole, then the multiword unit is considered one lexical unit.
- ii. Determine the basic meaning by utilising resources such as dictionaries as well as examining the contextual meaning of each lexical unit.
- iii. Contrast the contextual meaning with the basic meaning; if the contextual meaning is different from the basic meaning but can be comprehended in comparison with the basic meaning, the word is regarded a metaphor.

At this identification stage, further steps were taken in accordance with the guidelines proposed by Imani (2022) who sets out the steps researchers can adopt after identifying metaphor words, including listing both metaphor words and metaphor expressions, identifying the source and the target domains as well as the conceptual metaphor. These steps are reiterated below:



- i. Metaphor words are distinguished from metaphor expressions. While the meaning of metaphor words has been explained above, metaphor expressions are the linguistic expressions which reflect an underlying conceptual metaphor (Evans & Green, 2018).
- ii. Both domains of each metaphor expression are identified.
- iii. Conceptual metaphors are identified and generated. In accomplishing this, the “source-based approach” (Charteris-Black, 2014, p. 186) is applied. The literal meanings of words used metaphorically become the basis in forming a conceptual metaphor. For example, “path” and “route” can be categorised under the conceptual metaphor of JOURNEY. While suggesting that a conceptual metaphor should not be too specific or too general, Charteris-Black emphasises that there are no definite and clear rules in this aspect.

This stage was a key phase in addressing the first research objective of identifying the underlying conceptual metaphors in the samples. An inductive approach was undertaken and was started with examining the samples before determining metaphors with the abovementioned methods. Considering the manageable sample size, this inductive method is feasible in this study. In the process of metaphor identification, *Oxford English Dictionary*, *Cambridge Dictionary* and *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online* were referred to. While *Oxford English Dictionary* is the most reliable source to identify the more basic meanings of words, *Cambridge Dictionary* and *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online* are two online corpus-based dictionary sources that researchers can rely on in identifying the contemporary word use including the more conventional metaphors which have been incorporated in dictionaries (Charteris-Black, 2014).

### ***Metaphor Interpretation***

Metaphor interpretation is a stage of interpreting and ascertaining how social representations are constructed in the metaphors identified (Charteris-Black, 2004) through the examination of the corresponding elements between the two domains. Applying the guidelines by Imani (2022) on metaphor interpretation, this study implemented the following steps:

- i. Interpret the mapping of the corresponding properties or elements from the source domain to the target domain in each conceptual metaphor.
- ii. Infer the assumptions that underlie such metaphor to illuminate the reason(s) why such conceptual metaphor was produced in the specific context and explain how the linguistic words or phrases evoke the metaphorical meanings in each conceptual metaphor.

### ***Metaphor Explanation***

Metaphor explanation concerns with the wider social context in ascertaining the purposes of using metaphors, judging whether and how they influence readers and analysing their persuasive role in forming, strengthening or influencing opinions by way of uncovering the underlying beliefs or intentions (Charteris-Black, 2014). Researchers can also offer explanations on the pragmatic roles played by such metaphors, particularly persuasion and evaluation (Charteris-Black, 2004; Imperiale & Phipps, 2022). Hunston and Thompson (as cited in Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 11) understands “evaluation” as expression of the writer or speaker stance or point of view on the propositions he or she is referring to.

In the current study, an in-depth analysis of the purposes or functions of each conceptual metaphor was undertaken to bring to light the invisible intentions behind the conceptual metaphor. The revelation of these motivations allows the investigation on how each conceptual metaphor fulfils the individual participant’s ultimate goal of persuasion in his or her argumentative writing, and this is exceptionally crucial to meet the second research objective of this study.

In analysing the metaphors produced, this study also considers the view of MacArthur (2010) who asserts that there are only more successful or less successful metaphors instead of correct or incorrect ones. Since conceptual metaphors are a way of conceptualising the reality, this study regards the

metaphors produced by each individual participant as his or her unique representation of the issue through their metaphoric thinking.

## Findings

### *Metaphor Identification*

After a close reading and examination, metaphor words and metaphor expressions were identified in each sample. Each metaphoric expression was marked as “Extract” and numbered. Table 1 below displays the paragraph from which each metaphor expression or extract was identified in each sample, alongside the nature of such paragraph.

**Table 1**

*Extract Number, Paragraph Number and Nature of Paragraph*

Sample Number	Extract Number	Paragraph Number	Nature of Paragraph
1	Extract 1	2	Argument
	Extract 2		
	Extract 3	3	Argument
	Extract 4		
2	Extract 1	1	Introduction
	Extract 2		
3	Extract	1	Introduction
4	Extract	3	Argument
5	Extract 1	3	Argument
	Extract 2		

Table 2 to Table 6 show the metaphor words identified in metaphor expressions found in each sample. Metaphor words were indicated in bold. Target domain, source domain and the conceptual metaphor underlying such metaphoric expressions were also determined.

**Table 2**

*Conceptual Metaphors in Sample 1*

Metaphor Expression	Target Domain	Source Domain	Conceptual Metaphor
Extract 1 Social media <b>transcends</b> physical borders, allowing individuals to engage with people from different cultures.	social media	global mass gathering	SOCIAL MEDIA IS A GLOBAL MASS GATHERING
Extract 2 Social media is capable of <b>erasing</b> limited interactions and providing no <b>barrier</b> to individuals who wish to get to know more people around the globe.			

<p>Extract 3</p> <p>Secondly, social media plays a role in <b>amplifying</b> unrepresented <b>voices</b>.</p> <p>Extract 4</p> <p>Social media provides a <b>platform</b> for <b>voices</b> that cannot be <b>heard</b>.</p>	<p>social media</p>	<p>loudspeaker</p>	<p>SOCIAL MEDIA IS A LOUDSPEAKER</p>
--	---------------------	--------------------	--

---

**Table 3**

*Conceptual Metaphor in Sample 2*

Metaphor Expression	Target Domain	Source Domain	Conceptual Metaphor
<p>Extract 1</p> <p>It is... a <b>world</b> without limitations, a <b>world</b> without restriction, a <b>world</b> without problems.</p> <p>Extract 2</p> <p>It is a <b>place</b> that we can find our <b>soul</b>; it is the <b>place</b> that we can find our knowledge; it is the <b>place</b> that we can find a solution.</p>	<p>social media</p>	<p>a free society</p>	<p>SOCIAL MEDIA IS A FREE SOCIETY</p>

---

**Table 4**

*Conceptual Metaphor in Sample 3*

Metaphor Expression	Target Domain	Source Domain	Conceptual Metaphor
<p>Extract</p> <p>Social media such as Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp are commonly used to the extent where people often ‘<b>check in</b>’ on a daily basis and is a <b>necessity</b> in our lives.</p>	<p>social media</p>	<p>accommodation</p>	<p>SOCIAL MEDIA IS ACCOMMODATION</p>

---

**Table 5**

*Conceptual Metaphor in Sample 4*

Metaphor Expression	Target Domain	Source Domain	Conceptual Metaphor
<p>Extract</p>	<p>social media</p>	<p>teacher</p>	<p>SOCIAL MEDIA IS A TEACHER</p>

It (social media) **broadens** the **horizon** of individuals and **teaches** them that no matter the differences or distance, we are human beings with similar life experiences.

**Table 6**

*Conceptual Metaphor in Sample 5*

Metaphor Expression	Target Domain	Source Domain	Conceptual Metaphor
Extract 1  Social media news is like a (the) spread of <b>wildfire</b> in the <b>forest</b> .	social media	strong force (wildfire that spreads in the forest)	SOCIAL MEDIA IS A STRONG FORCE
Extract 2  Therefore, people expressed their feelings and thoughts against this judicial punishment via the social media <b>platform</b> as it holds the <b>power</b> to <b>move</b> the <b>Eiffel Tower</b> .		strong force (the strength to move the Eiffel Tower)	

**Metaphor Interpretation and Explanation**

Table 7 to Table 12 summarise the mapping of elements from the source domain to the target domain in each conceptual metaphor produced.

**Table 7**

*Mapping in Conceptual Metaphor 1 of Sample 1: SOCIAL MEDIA IS A GLOBAL MASS GATHERING*

Conceptual Metaphor	Properties of the Source Domain (Global Mass Gathering)	Properties of the Target Domain (Social Media)
SOCIAL MEDIA IS A GLOBAL MASS GATHERING	Participants of the gathering who are from diverse geographical areas, nationalities, ethnicities, age groups and social and cultural backgrounds congregate at a venue. Participants of the gathering interact and socialise with individuals from diverse geographical areas, nationalities, ethnicities, age groups and social and cultural backgrounds.	Social media users from diverse geographical areas, nationalities, ethnicities, age groups and social and cultural backgrounds meet virtually.  Users virtually interact with other users from diverse geographical areas, nationalities, ethnicities, age groups and social and cultural backgrounds by adding other users as friends, “following” them, or engaging in conversations via direct messages (DM), tweets, comments, or chats.

Table 7 exhibits the parallels between the source concept of a global mass gathering and the target concept of social media. Framing social media as a global mass gathering, the participant, who developed Sample 1, encourages readers to envisage social media as a gigantic gathering where individuals congregate and interact without restrictions of geographical areas, nationalities, ethnicities, age groups and social and cultural backgrounds. A mass gathering, according to the World Health Organisation’s definition, is “a planned or spontaneous event” (2019, para. 1), and it includes a major sporting, religious or cultural event. In parallel, social media is a mode of interaction among the global communities, and users socialise virtually by sharing or exchanging ideas. Virtual communities on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube are where interaction is vibrant with a host of interactional activities across the globe, blurring all geographical limits.

Resembling the internet, social media is an abstract umbrella term that captures a wide range of computer technology programmes and web-based software or applications, resulting in the difficulty of explicating it with literal words. In another way of putting this, the conceptual metaphor can be deployed as a strategy to compensate for the inability of expressing an abstract idea (Littlemore & Low, 2006). Thus, to illustrate social interaction on social media, the participant invokes the metaphor of a global mass gathering. Socialising in a global mass gathering, such as the World Cup as an international sporting event, enacts a concrete concept of transboundary interaction which eliminates all obstacles of interaction, as implied in metaphor expressions of “*transcends physical borders*”, “*erasing limited interactions*” and “*providing no barrier*”. The understanding of how socialising takes place virtually on social media is therefore enacted through the real picture of a mass gathering on a global scale.

In addition, through this metaphor, the participant suggests a positive evaluation of social media by indicating that no physical boundary can restrain social media interaction. A global mass gathering further implies the extensive opportunities of meeting people from different geographical areas, thus expanding one’s social circle. The parallel of this extensive interaction can be drawn in the case of social media, implying the huge potential of building one social network on social media.

Conceptual Metaphor 1 is therefore an instrumental rhetorical tool for the participant to convince readers to accept the proposition of “Social media brings more advantages than disadvantages” through two major rhetorical means. Firstly, the borderless interaction and communication on social media becomes conceivable when the elements of the source domain, “a global mass gathering”, are evoked. Secondly, it implies a positive evaluation of social media by indicating that social media has made physical boundaries irrelevant in communication or interaction, and this transboundary interaction is capable of building users’ social networks in an expansive and diversified manner.

**Table 8**

*Mapping in Conceptual Metaphor 2 of Sample 1: SOCIAL MEDIA IS A LOUDSPEAKER*

Conceptual Metaphor	Properties of the Source Domain (Loudspeaker)	Properties of the Target Domain (Social Media)
SOCIAL MEDIA IS A LOUDSPEAKER	With a loudspeaker, a sound is loud enough to reach a large group of audience.	Users’ messages and opinions can be accessed by a large number of social media users.
	With a loudspeaker, a sound is loud enough to be heard by an audience at a distance.	Users’ messages and opinions can be accessed by other users from faraway geographical areas.
	A loudspeaker turns an inaudible or feeble sound into an audible one.	Users can use social media to call for attention to a message which would otherwise go unnoticed.

Framing social media as a loudspeaker in Table 8 above, the participant has a concealed intention to establish his or her viewpoint: social media is an advantage to users. The participant achieves this intention by linking the abstract idea of social media’s reachability to the concrete idea of loudspeaker. Although social media’s reachability generally means its ability to access its users, without this metaphor, readers would be otherwise unable to fully envision the extent of its reachability. The salient feature of a loudspeaker is its ability of amplifying a sound and making it powerful. This feature aids readers in conceiving social media’s enormous ability to reach mass audiences through the varied social media sites or apps. Social media also has a suite of methods of sharing information with the mass. The efficient shareability of content on social media occurs when one user shares it with many, and more remarkably, many users share it with many. This far-reaching effect is captured by the conceptual metaphor produced, through the amplifying ability of a loudspeaker as the source concept.

By means of the metaphor expressions “*amplifying unrepresented voices*” and “*provides a platform for voices that cannot be heard*” that underlie the conceptual metaphor SOCIAL MEDIA IS A LOUDSPEAKER, the participant convinces readers to accept his or her stance that social media is a blessing to users. All these metaphor expressions constitute positive representations of the participant’s viewpoint, and they imply that on social media, underrepresented or aggrieved individuals can be assured of being noticed or heard. In reality, social media has empowered users to fruitfully initiate widespread social or political movements and progress. By providing a positive evaluation of social media as being influential in serving justice to users who feel marginalised, this conceptual metaphor urges readers to see the bright side of this interaction technology.

**Table 9**

*Mapping in Conceptual Metaphor of Sample 2: SOCIAL MEDIA IS A FREE SOCIETY*

Conceptual Metaphor	Properties of the Source Domain (Free Society)	Properties of the Target Domain (Social Media)
SOCIAL MEDIA IS A FREE SOCIETY	Citizens are free to act and speak without restrictions provided that no harm is inflicted on others, and they can do many things which are not forbidden (Butler, 2013).	Users are free to express themselves, upload content, comment and share other users’ content or views provided that the content or views are inoffensive to others.
	Citizens are free to develop their talents and abilities as they deem fit to become “whole human beings” (Butler, 2013) and be who they intend to be.	Users can choose to be who they want to be by creating their own identities in their social media profiles.
	Citizens are free to create, innovate improve and seek knowledge (Butler, 2013).	Users have the freedom to access information and knowledge from a vast reservoir of online sources in all domains.
	A free society with peace as a key element and with citizens who are “whole human beings” (Butler, 2013) is presumably a happier society.	Users derive their gratification and satisfaction from social connections and entertainment content such as short-form videos, online games, movies, music and video clips.

Table 9 above displays the correspondences between a free society as the source domain and social media as the target domain. The conceptual metaphor SOCIAL MEDIA IS A FREE SOCIETY is produced to play an empathetic function (Charteris-Black, 2014), arousing emotions in an advantageous manner to the participant. Metaphor expressions such as “*It is...a world without limitations, a world*

*without restriction, a world without problems*” and *“It is a place that we can find our soul; it is the place that we can find our knowledge; it is the place that we can find a solution”* whip up the emotions of optimism and hopefulness among readers, inducing a promising perception of social media. By mapping the salient characteristics of the source domain (a free society), namely freedom, the free choice to forge their personal identities, pursuit of knowledge and satisfaction or happiness, to the characteristics of the target domain (social media), the participant implies a positive outlook of social media and arouses positive evaluations of the target concept.

Reinforcing the persuasive effect of the conceptual metaphor, the participant strategises the use of an ideology, a free society, as the source concept. Social media is painted with the ideals of a free society. Firstly, metaphor phrases *“a world without limitations, a world without restriction”* evoke the notion of freedom, and freedom of expression is by and large upheld to a large extent in both a free society and on social media, save and except content deemed illegal or offensive. Secondly, the metaphoric phrase *“a place that we can find our soul”* captures the sense of true “self” and self-identity. Both citizens in a free society and users of social media possess a great amount of freedom to pursue their life purposes and determine their own identities. In a free society, citizens are free to be their true “self” by expressing themselves through various forms of freedom such as freedom of expression and religion, whereas on social media, users exercise their freedom of choosing to be who they desire to be through their social media profiles.

Thirdly, the participant describes social media as *“the place that we can find our knowledge”*; the freedom to improve oneself is both highly attainable in a free society and on social media by way of pursuit of knowledge. Fourthly, the linguistic expression *“a world without problems”* implies satisfaction or happiness. In a free society, peace is a key element, and citizens are free to develop themselves to be whole or perfect humans (Butler, 2013). This is parallel to the satisfaction or happiness social media users derive from various entertainment activities or content as well as social networking. Social media platforms have a prominent ability to connect users, resulting in emotional well-being, happiness and pleasure (Graciyal & Viswam, 2021). For Generation Z specifically, satisfaction in using social media comes from the happiness in sharing stories, images, and videos (Euajarusphan, 2021).

As elaborated above, the participant addresses the hidden need for persuasion by encouraging readers to envisage social media as an ideology, a free society. Through this rhetorical strategy, readers are moved to approve the participant’s viewpoint that users are the beneficiaries of social media, and social media is a beneficial creation for users.

**Table 10**

*Mapping in Conceptual Metaphor of Sample 3: SOCIAL MEDIA IS ACCOMMODATION*

Conceptual Metaphor	Properties of the Source Domain (Accommodation)	Properties of the Target Domain (Social Media)
SOCIAL MEDIA IS ACCOMMODATION	Dwellers returns to their houses daily, and house or shelter is a basic need.	Users engage in their respective virtual activities on social media daily, and users log into their social media account for various needs related to social networking, communication, work, business, information and education.
	A homeless person experiences a sense of loss as he or she has no definite direction or shelter.	Without social media, one could feel clueless as he or she will miss out on various opportunities, updates of the contemporary world, or a huge volume of information.

In conceptual metaphor SOCIAL MEDIA IS ACCOMMODATION, the participant, who produced Sample 3, awakens positive emotions in readers by mapping the correspondences between the source domain (accommodation) and the target domain (social media) as exemplified in Table 10. Enacting social media as a “*necessity*” of accommodation that people need to “*check in on a daily basis*”, the participant leads readers to perceive social media as a need that is inseparable from users’ lives, thus invoking the feelings of openness and acceptance towards social media.

Another emotion that is aroused in readers is the fear of loss. One cannot possibly imagine the dire consequences of not owning a house or shelter, and homelessness leads to unpleasant life conditions. Fear is triggered when the participant draws a parallel between homelessness and living without social media, and this evokes fear of losing out on opportunities, updates, news and information. Driven by all these subtle feelings, readers are very likely to accept the participant’s stance: social media is a promising invention to users.

**Table 11**

*Mapping in Conceptual Metaphor of Sample 4: SOCIAL MEDIA IS A TEACHER*

Conceptual Metaphor	Properties of the Source Domain (Teacher)	Properties of the Target Domain (Social Media)
SOCIAL MEDIA IS A TEACHER	A teacher imparts knowledge to his or her students.	Knowledge sharing on social media is prevalent in all domains, for instance, education, politics, health, medicine and law.
	A teacher imparts values to his or her students.	In using social media, users learn to practise important values, for instance, users learn to be innovative, interactive, collaborative, explorative and adaptive.
	A teacher teaches his or her students to be better humans.	Users learn and improve themselves in certain aspects of their lives as they utilise social media for the gain of knowledge and values.

According to Charteris-Black (2014), the use of metaphor can contribute to persuasion through establishing trust. The production of conceptual metaphor SOCIAL MEDIA IS A TEACHER through metaphoric language of “*broadens the horizon*” and “*teaches*” has a covert intention to earn trust from readers. Teachers are entities who have moral and ethical facets. By mapping the features of the source domain (teacher) to the target domain, as demonstrated in Table 11, the participant has an obscure motivation to represent social media as having the ability to deliver knowledge and instil values among its users, thus earning confidence from readers that social media benefits users in these meaningful ways. In other words, this conceptual metaphor is produced to gain readers’ trust in social media’s educational value. Implying how social media is educational, the participant nudges his or her readers to visualise it as the teaching profession which is entrusted with the responsibility of educating society. This aids the participant in attaining his or her implicit intention of convincing readers to believe in the importance of social media.



**Table 12**

*Mapping in Conceptual Metaphor of Sample 5: SOCIAL MEDIA IS A STRONG FORCE*

Conceptual Metaphor	Properties of the Source Domain (Strong Force)	Properties of the Target Domain (Social Media)
SOCIAL MEDIA IS A STRONG FORCE	A wildfire is a powerful natural force that travels rapidly and unstopably. Moving the Eiffel Tower requires a vast amount of strength and power.	News and information spread in a speedy and viral way. Social media is highly influential and powerful, and the influence or power is manifested by its enormous impacts on the dynamics of human communication and life.

As exemplified in Table 12 above, the participant, who wrote Sample 5, deploys two metaphoric expressions with respect to powerful forces, “wildfire in the forest” and “the power to move the Eiffel Tower”, to capture the concept of a “strong force”. Without the conceptual metaphor SOCIAL MEDIA IS A STRONG FORCE, the enormity of social media’s power and influence on the world may not be fully conceived by readers. Therefore, a metaphor is vital to address the need for a clear and concrete illustration. Such huge influence or power is illustrated by the vivid images of “wildfire in a forest” and the strength to move a colossal physical structure as two types of strong force. The understanding of these strong forces enables the conceptualisation of social media as immensely powerful in spreading information and extremely influential on human life. The concrete elements of “strong force” provide the means for readers to imagine the power of social media, leading them to believe in its paramount importance for users.

The formidable forces of “wildfire in the forest” and “the power to move the Eiffel Tower” also create a strong awe-inspiring emotion in readers, denoting the participant’s underlying intention to move his or her readers’ emotion in a way that facilitates persuasion. More specifically, this metaphor is intended to influence readers to feel impressed by such prominent power of social media.

In addition to the above six conceptual metaphor produced by the participants to lend support to their viewpoints, another conceptual metaphor was identified in the counterclaim section of Sample 2. When drawing attention to the opposition’s argument, the participant raises one conceptual metaphor, SOCIAL MEDIA IS A MAZE, as shown in Table 13 below. The metaphor words are marked in bold.

**Table 13**

*Conceptual Metaphor in Counterclaim of Sample 2*

Metaphor Expression	Target Domain	Source Domain	Conceptual Metaphor
Extract 1 This is because social media is a big <b>network</b> that one won’t be <b>tracked</b> .	social media	maze	SOCIAL MEDIA IS A MAZE
Extract 2 Hence, social media brings <b>wounds</b> instead of <b>cure</b> .			

Table 14 below sets out the corresponding properties between the source concept and the target concept of the above conceptual metaphor.

**Table 14**

*Mapping in Conceptual Metaphor in Counterclaim of Sample 2: SOCIAL MEDIA IS A MAZE*

Conceptual Metaphor	Properties of the Source Domain (Maze)	Properties of the Target Domain (Social Media)
SOCIAL MEDIA IS A MAZE	<p>A maze consists of confusing pathways that branch out into many other paths; thus, looking for one’s hideout in a maze is extremely challenging.</p> <p>It is difficult to navigate as it has barriers and obstacles.</p> <p>Instead of finding the way out, one may get lost or get hurt in a maze.</p>	<p>Tracking down wrongdoers on social media is difficult as users can hide their identity behind an ingenuine account.</p> <p>There are many pitfalls on social media such as data breach, privacy issues, a huge amount of misinformation and harmful content as well as online frauds.</p> <p>Considering the many pitfalls, instead of finding the solution to a problem, users may be misled by unauthentic information or news, exacerbating the situation or leading to other adverse consequences.</p>

Table 14 outlines the correspondences between the two domains. By producing the conceptual metaphor SOCIAL MEDIA IS A MAZE, the participant’s intention is to raise a possible argument by opponents. Metaphor phrases of “*a big network*” and “*one won’t be tracked*” capture the source concept of “*maze*” which is a physical entity to imply the difficulty of tracking down individuals such as cybercriminals because of the many obstacles, particularly the loopholes on social media. The complex idea of pitfalls on social media is also vividly illuminated by evoking a physical structure of maze which is complicated by nature. The metaphor phrase of “*social media brings wounds instead of cure*”, produced together with the other two metaphor phrases, “*a big network*” and “*one won’t be tracked*” triggers the picture of being trapped in a maze. Instead of finding the way out, one might get lost or get hurt. This implies that social media is not only incapable of offering a solution to a problem, but it could also cause further problems. As illustrated in Table 14, social media abounds with misinformation and unauthentic news, and these unreliable sources not only would fail to provide solutions, but they would also exacerbate a situation or cause other problematic situations.

This conceptual metaphor also implies a negative evaluation of social media as being full of pitfalls, stirring up negative emotions of pessimism and gloom in readers. The negative evaluation and emotions potentially influence readers’ judgement, influencing them to see social media in an unfavourable light. Nevertheless, by raising this conceptual metaphor in the counterclaim section, the participant, whose stance leans towards the advantages of social media, does not intend to convince readers of the downside of social media. The inclusion of this conceptual metaphor as a counterclaim signals the participant’s awareness of the potential argument by the opposition, and it is raised to exemplify how the opposition could equally rely on conceptual metaphors to persuade readers to accept the other side of the coin.

## **Discussion**

In all the five samples, all participants take the same stance on the proposition of “Social media brings more advantages than disadvantages”, and all participants propose arguments to support this proposition. Seven conceptual metaphors, GLOBAL MASS GATHERING, LOUDSPEAKER, FREE SOCIETY, ACCOMMODATION, TEACHER, STRONG FORCE and MAZE were interpreted and inferred from the five samples to address the first research objective. While the first six conceptual metaphors are produced to support and reinforce the position taken by the participants, the last conceptual metaphor is created to draw attention to the potential argument that could be raised by opponents.

All these metaphors are novel creations, and they are novel metaphors. Based on Kövecses’ (2010) definition, these metaphors are not entrenched expressions in the usage of English, and neither can they be found in contemporary dictionaries or in everyday communication. An outstanding aspect of metaphor use among multilingual and L2 learners is the element of creativity, and research found that multilingual and L2 learners show the tendency to produce new and creative ideas (Fürst & Grin, 2017), which include new metaphoric ideas, as demonstrated in this study.

To add understanding of how these conceptual metaphors reflect the participants’ more universal or broader perspectives of visualising and constructing the reality of social media, the above metaphors can be classified into six broader types: “event” (GLOBAL MASS GATHERING), “material entities” (LOUDSPEAKER, MAZE), “basic need” (ACCOMMODATION), “force” (STRONG FORCE), “society” (FREE SOCIETY) and “human” (TEACHER). All these broader conceptual metaphors allow us to gauge the key role the participants aim to assign to a metaphor, albeit the multiple roles played a metaphor. Metaphors which are able to produce real and solid mental pictures such as “event”, “material entities” and “force” can be intended to primarily draw correspondences between an abstract domain and a concrete domain. Metaphors which are associated with human life or humans such as “basic need”, “society” and “human” can essentially be intended to have the key function of arousing emotions or implicitly preaching values to imply positive evaluations. Nonetheless, regardless of which key role the metaphors are expected to play, all of them reflect the participants’ inconspicuous intentions to achieve persuasive effects.

Attention should also be drawn to the part or section of the writing where a conceptual metaphor is produced because this offers some additional insight into the exploration of the second research objective, that is the motivation behind the metaphor production. Nearly all conceptual metaphors are created in two primary parts. Firstly, two metaphors were identified in the introduction where the participants begin to introduce the notion of social media. FREE SOCIETY and ACCOMMODATION metaphors are evoked in the introduction of Sample 2 and Sample 3, indicative of the participants’ proactive intention to influence readers’ judgement and perception of social media. Secondly, four conceptual metaphors, GLOBAL MASS GATHERING, LOUDSPEAKER, TEACHER and STRONG FORCE were uncovered in the arguments section, where each participant proposes grounds to substantiate the proposition. This finding signifies that the phenomenon of producing conceptual metaphors as rhetorical means is evident when the participants attempt to sway readers’ judgements to establish their arguments or stance on the issue. This also validates the interpersonal function of metaphor suggested by Goatly (2011) that metaphor use plays an effective part in establishing argument, persuading and influencing judgements. Through metaphor explanation, the current study further affirms the purposes of metaphor suggested by Charteris-Black’s (2014): illustrating the abstract or complex concepts, arousing emotions to influence readers to perceive the issue in a way desired by the writers, implying positive evaluations of the writers’ stance and framing the issue as an ideology. In the samples in the current study, all these purposes lead to a united goal of persuasion: social media is an unquestionable blessing to users.

## **Conclusion**

The critical analysis in this study suggests that the inclusion of metaphor in argumentative writing by L2 learners is beyond the superficial purpose of elevating the language in writing. When examined critically, the conceptual metaphors created in the samples represent the participants’ thoughts, and these

metaphors bear rhetorical properties that influence the evaluations or judgements of the arguments presented to readers. This finding is parallel to the main tenet of Conceptual Metaphor Theory that metaphor is the window to our conceptual system, and in the present study, the metaphors identified reflect the participants' thoughts related to the benefits social media has to offer to users. More importantly, these novel conceptual metaphors are proof of "cognitive instruments" (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 27) which pave new ways of understanding and seeing social media.

It is pivotal to draw our attention to Charteris-Black's (2014) explanation on critical discourse analysis, based on which CMA was developed. He states that in critical discourse analysis, social contexts, including the identity and social position of the speaker (the participants in the present study) are instrumental in uncovering the undisclosed intentions of the speaker or writer. In the current research, considering the participants' social position as Generation Z, a generation that grew up in blooming digital developments, the production of conceptual metaphors which paint a promising picture of social media is predictable, as nearly all such metaphors are slanted towards a positive representation of social media.

Charteris-Black (2014) also argues that metaphors are used to "frame issues in a way that is favourable to the speaker's argument" (p. 203). The truth of this assertion is observable in the findings of this study which manifest how metaphors constitute the rhetorical devices in positively evaluating social media to support the proposition in the task. When metaphors are utilised, their creators only evoke elements of the source domain that are favourable to their arguments, whereas other elements of the metaphors which may undermine their stance are left hidden and untouched. This suggests that uncovering the undisclosed intentions behind such metaphorical choices often requires a critical examination.

### **Implications of Study**

Despite the small number of samples, which may be viewed as a limitation, this study provides in-depth analyses to address the two research objectives, and these analyses further acknowledge the role of metaphor as a crucial rhetorical instrument in L2 argumentative writing. From a practical perspective, this research gives a clear clue to L2 language teachers that the inability to take advantage from the functions of metaphors could be a setback that impedes learners' writing. This is owing to the nature of argumentative writing in which appeal to reason and appeal to emotion are crucial strategies which can be deployed effectively through metaphors. Since persuasion demands metaphor use, and metaphor is more persuasive in comparison to plain literal language, incompetence in metaphor production could be a justification for ineffective writing. From establishing a tenable and impressive argument to earning readers' strong approval of a viewpoint, these argumentation goals require the armoury of metaphor. Without the competence to use or produce metaphors, the learning process of argumentative writing could be deemed incomplete rather than imperfect.

In order for L2 learners to benefit from Lakoff and Johnson's theory on conceptual metaphor, especially translating their metaphoric thoughts to linguistic expressions to serve the persuasive purposes of writing, learners' deliberate acquisition of knowledge on conceptual metaphor should be highly motivated. Metaphor use ought to constitute one of the principal writing skills and assessment criteria in L2 academic writing, more particularly argumentative writing. If the assessment criteria are exclusive of metaphor, learners' use of metaphor will not yield any impact on their evaluation; hence, the lack of keenness to deliberately produce metaphor in their writing is foreseeable (Ahlgren et al., 2021).

Considering that the highest proficiency level is ideally the final goal of all learners in acquiring English as a second language, and metaphor use is predominantly indicative of a learner's language proficiency (Hoàng, 2015; Hoang & Boers, 2018; Littlemore et al., 2013; Yang, 2022), the literal use of language is obviously no longer sufficient. For this same reason, the mastery of metaphor can no longer be acknowledged as a peripheral preference of linguistic style, and this suggests that language teachers should depart from the pedagogical practice of treating L2 learners' metaphor use in writing as merely an optional strategy.

### **Acknowledgement**

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to the participants for their time spent on the samples of writing. Their deep and full commitment to providing the samples for analysis made this research achievable.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author has declared that no competing interests exist.

### **Author Contribution Statement**

Chin Chiu Jin: Conceptualisation, Data Curation, Methodology, Validation, Writing, Review & Editing.

### **Funding**

The author did not receive any financial support from external sources for the research and publication of this article.

### **Ethics Statements**

Our publication ethics follow The Committee of Publication Ethics (COPE) guideline. <https://publicationethics.org/>.

### **Author Biography**

Chin Chiu Jin is a lecturer in the Institute of Empowerment in Multimedia University.

### **References**

- Ahlgren, K., Golden, A., & Magnusson, U. (2021). Metaphor in education. *Metaphor and the Social World*, 11(2), 196–211. <https://doi.org/10.1075/msw.00015.ahl>
- Boeynaems, A., Burgers, C., Konijn, E. A., & Steen, G. J. (2017). The effects of metaphorical framing on political persuasion: A systematic literature review. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 32(2), 118–134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926488.2017.1297623>.
- Butler, E. (2013). *Foundations of a free society*. The Institute of Economic Affairs.
- Charteris-Black, J. (2004). *Corpus approaches to critical metaphor analysis*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Charteris-Black, J. (2014). *Analysing political speeches: Rhetoric, discourse and metaphor*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cuccio, V. (2016). Embodiment and persuasion. The communicative power of metaphors. In F. Piazza & S. Di Piazza (eds.). *Rivista Italiana di Filosofia del linguaggio* (pp. 53-65). Building consensus.
- Deignan, A. (2012). Figurative language in discourse. *Cognitive Pragmatics*. In Schmid, H. J. eds. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. pp. 437-462.
- Dolot, A. (2018). The characteristics of Generation Z. *E-Mentor*, 74, 44–50. <https://doi.org/10.15219/em74.1351>
- Ervas, F., Gola, E., & Rossi, M. G. (2018). Argumentation as a bridge between metaphor and reasoning. In S. Oswald, T. Herman, & J. Jacquin (Eds.), *Argumentation and language—Linguistic, cognitive and discursive explorations*. (pp. 153–170). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

- Euajarusphan, A. (2021). Online social media usage behavior, attitude, satisfaction, and online social media literacy of generation X, generation Y, and generation Z. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3998457>
- Evans, V., & Green, M. (2018). *Cognitive linguistics: An introduction*. Routledge.
- Fürst, G., & Grin, F. (2017). Multilingualism and creativity: A multivariate approach. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 39(4), 341–355. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2017.1389948>
- Goatly, A. (2011). *The language of metaphors*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Graciyal, D. G., & Viswam, D. (2021). Social media and emotional well-being: Pursuit of happiness or pleasure. *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 31(1), 99–115. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1326365x211003737>
- Herrmann, J. B. (2013). *Metaphor in academic discourse. Linguistic forms, conceptual structures, communicative functions and cognitive representations*. LOT Dissertation Series, vol. 333, Utrecht.
- Hoàng, Đ. H. T. (2015). *Metaphorical language in second language learners' essays: Products and processes* [Victoria University of Wellington Library]. Retrieved February 21, 2024, from <http://dx.doi.org/10.26686/wgtn.17009243>
- Hoang, H., & Boers, F. (2018). Gauging the association of EFL learners' writing proficiency and their use of metaphorical language. *System*, 74, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2018.02.004>
- Imani, A. (2022). Critical metaphor analysis: A systematic step-by-step guideline. *LSP International Journal*, 9(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.11113/lspi.v9.17975>
- Imperiale, M. G., & Phipps, A. (2022). Cuts destroy, hurt, kill: A critical metaphor analysis of the response of UK academics to the UK overseas aid budget funding cuts. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 17(1), 61–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2021.2024838>
- Kohl, K., Bolognesi, M., & Werkmann Horvat, A. (2020). The creative power of metaphor. In *Creative Multilingualism* (pp. 25–46). Open Book Publishers. <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/obp.0206.01>
- Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (2nd Edition). Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kövecses, Z. (2017). Conceptual metaphor theory. In E. Semino & Z. Demjén (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of metaphor and language* (pp. 13–27). Routledge.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2003). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- le Roux, D. B., & Parry, D. (2020). *The Town Square in your pocket: Exploring four metaphors of social media*. Center for Open Science. <http://dx.doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/58bvj>
- Littlemore, J., & Low, G. (2006). *Figurative thinking and foreign language learning*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230627567>
- Littlemore, J., Krennmayr, T., Turner, J., & Turner, S. (2013). An investigation into metaphor use at different levels of second language writing. *Applied Linguistics*, 35(2), 117–144. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amt004>
- Lu, Q. (2021). “Desire is like a dreadful monster”: Analysis of extended metaphors in L2 argumentative essays by Chinese learners of English. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.803359>
- MacArthur, F. (2010). Metaphorical competence in EFL. *AILA Review*, 23, 155–173. <https://doi.org/10.1075/aila.23.09mac>
- Maudslay, R. H., & Teufel, S. (2022). Metaphorical Polysemy detection: Conventional Metaphor Meets Word Sense Disambiguation. *Proceedings of the 29th International Conference on Computational Linguistics* (pp. 65–77). <https://aclanthology.org/2022.ccoling-1.7.pdf>
- McGlone, M. S. (2007). What is the explanatory value of a conceptual metaphor? *Language & Communication*, 27(2), 109–126. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2006.02.016>

- Nacey, S. (2009). Novel metaphors and learner English. *The Stockholm 2009 Metaphor Festival*, Stockholm, Sweden.
- Nacey, S. (2013). *Metaphors in learner English*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Nacey, S. (2019). Development of L2 metaphorical production. In *Metaphor in Foreign Language Instruction* (pp. 173–198). De Gruyter (Ed). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/9783110630367-009>
- Nacey, S. (2020). Metaphors in high-stakes language exams. In Å. B. Henriksen, K. H. Hernæs, & T. K. Lønngren (Eds.), *Språkreiser: Festskrift til Anne Golden på 70-årsdagen* (pp. 287–308). University of Oslo. [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Susan-Nacey/publication/348541659\\_Metaphors\\_in\\_high-stakes\\_language\\_exams/links/6002d792299bf140889b93a7/Metaphors-in-high-stakes-language-exams.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Susan-Nacey/publication/348541659_Metaphors_in_high-stakes_language_exams/links/6002d792299bf140889b93a7/Metaphors-in-high-stakes-language-exams.pdf)
- Nguyen, T. H. T. (2019). Using metaphor in EFL classroom to enhance writing skills: A case study. *International Journal of Humanity Studies (IJHS)*, 3(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v3i1.2005>
- Postma, M. (2015). Metaphor and meaning: Analysing metaphor use in the creative work of second language learners of English. *Per Linguam*, 31(3). <https://doi.org/10.5785/31-3-610>
- Pragglejaz Group. (2007). MIP: A method for identifying metaphorically used words in discourse. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 22(1), 1–39. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms2201\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms2201_1)
- Redden, S. M. (2017). Metaphor analysis. In J. Matthes, C. S. Davis, & R. F. Potter (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of communication research methods* (pp. 1-9). Wiley. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320927887\\_Metaphor\\_Analysis](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320927887_Metaphor_Analysis)
- Reinhardt, J. (2020). Metaphors for social media-enhanced foreign language teaching and learning. *Foreign Language Annals*, 53(2), 234–242. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12462>
- Ritchie, L. D. (2013). *Metaphor*. Cambridge University Press.
- Saneie Moghadam, M., & Ghafar Samar, R. (2020). Metaphor in second language academic writing. *Language Awareness*, 29(3–4), 255–271. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2020.1786577>
- Singh, A. P., & Dangmei, J. (2016). Understanding the generation Z: the future workforce. *South-Asian journal of multidisciplinary studies*, 3(3), 1-5. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305280948\\_UNDERSTANDING\\_THE\\_GENERATION\\_Z\\_THE\\_FUTURE\\_WORKFORCE](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305280948_UNDERSTANDING_THE_GENERATION_Z_THE_FUTURE_WORKFORCE)
- World Health Organisation. (2019). Emergencies: *WHO's role in mass gatherings*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/what-is-who-s-role-in-mass-gatherings>
- Yang, X. (2022). A study of the relationship between English learners' metaphoric competence and writing proficiency. *Asian Journal of Social Science Studies*, 7(6), 61. <https://doi.org/10.20849/ajsss.v7i6.1209>