

2013

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Recommended Citation

Smith, Bradley (2013) "The Journey Metaphor's Entailments for Framing Learning," *The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning*: Vol. 19 , Article 5.

<https://doi.org/10.7290/jaepl19qeeg>

Available at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jaepl/vol19/iss1/5>

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Cover Page Footnote

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The Journey Metaphor's Entailments For Framing Learning

Brad Smith

Discursive framing is clearly becoming an important part of our work as writing teachers. This insight, made most notably by Linda Adler-Kassner, focuses on the use of conceptual metaphors and framing for communicating what writing instruction means to stakeholders and students outside the composition and rhetoric community. Yet Adler-Kassner argues that writing program administrators and writing instructors as a group have used frames that are all over the map, without any shared ideals or strategies, and so a more consistent use of framing is needed (5-6). Lad Tobin agrees that the pedagogical metaphors writing teachers use are often offered so haphazardly that “most are rarely integrated into the course as a whole or into the students’ own conception of and experience in composing” (446). This problem has culminated most recently in the position statement “Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing.” Created by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Writing Project—this document is designed to offer a shared set of ideals for discussing what is meant by “college readiness” in terms of writing. Though the document never explicitly states that its goal is to “frame” first-year writing, some of its authors, e.g., Adler-Kassner and Peggy O’Neill, have extensively researched and discussed framing as part of their own scholarship. Moreover, Judith Summerfield and Philip Anderson write that they applaud the “Framework’s” effort, even though they are disappointed with the result (544). For those outside the field, the document helps focus the conversation about the kind of framing consistency that writing teachers can use to discuss what it means to be prepared for first-year writing.

While much of our use of conceptual metaphor remains tacit, we must pay careful attention to how shifting the use of conceptual metaphors can lead to a shift in the way that a concept is framed. As Keely R. Austin states, repeated and wide-spread metaphor use “offers the potential for change if a community chooses to strengthen a new, repeated pathway (270). When a discourse community collectively uses one set of conceptual metaphors over another, the cumulative effect reframes the concept being discussed.¹

In recent years, writing teachers have shifted away from framing learning to write as collecting ideas (i.e., writing is a process of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing) to moving through space, following what Nedra Reynolds terms contemporary theories’ “fascination with ‘movement’” (“Who’s Going” 541). I would argue that this shift is occurring for two

¹ The journey metaphor for writing is one of the most widely used, but there are a myriad metaphors for writing and activities associated with writing that have been proposed and critiqued in composition scholarship. To name a few: Burke’s parlor metaphor; writing is *not* speaking/ writing is growing (Sommers “Revision Strategies”); writing is/is *not* like playing a sport (Hart); writing is chaos (kyburz); cultural linguistic difference is transcultural literacy (Lu); citing research is “passing on” and plagiarism is *not* theft (Robillard); writing research is an ecology (Fleckenstein, et al.); writing is travel (Clark); writing is jazz (Clark); writing is music (Elbow); collaborative writing is quilting (Fischer, et al.), etc. Such metaphors remain outside the purview of this essay, the focus of which is the role that the journey metaphor plays in conceptualizing learning and writing.

reasons. First, numerous scholars criticize frames that employ the conceptual metaphor, *Ideas are Objects*—e.g., the banking model. Second, communication technology has changed in recent years, from stationary devices requiring connection to “land lines” to mobile devices which are wireless. This change is bringing about a shift from a reliance on the Conduit Metaphor (a word directly conveys an idea) to other conceptual metaphors. For instance, because of our new use of mobile technology, Nicole Brown observes that metaphors of graffiti and public art may help composition theorists build location-aware pedagogies that can bring writing from the streets to the classroom (242). Such metaphors frame communication in a new way, when compared to the conduit metaphor.

Because this shift in usage is flourishing, the field of composition and rhetoric would benefit from critically reflecting on the different ways that journey-based conceptual metaphors can be employed to frame the act of learning to write. This essay shows the different ways that the conceptual metaphor *Learning is a Journey* can be employed to frame the act of learning to write. It delineates, where possible, that *Learning is a Journey* can collect together different pedagogical metaphors for the act of writing.

The Importance of Framing and its Relationship to Conceptual Metaphor

Erving Goffman defines frames as “principles of organization which govern events—at least social ones—and our subjective involvement in them” (10-11). In other words, frames serve as “schemata of interpretation” for social interactions (21). Or as Gunther Kress puts it, “there is *no meaning without framing*” (10; emphasis in original). While Goffman’s early work is certainly an important beginning, we must take into account scholarship on the role of analogy in cognition in order to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of semantic conceptualization. Frames are one of a few different components of mental space and must be analogically blended to produce complex thoughts. Frames work in conjunction with conceptual metaphors to organize experience. As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson write, conceptual metaphors that are “constitutive” of a theory limit the way that you can draw conclusions within the framework (117). For this reason, the way that students and teachers frame the context of the classroom and the interactions entailed within that context are only one part of a larger cognitive system for creating meaning and interacting with the world. Because frames are connective and relational structures, they organize and interpret meaning based on previous experiences by establishing an analogical relationship between those experiences and the current context. Therefore, any discussion of framing must be accompanied by a discussion of conceptual metaphors, which serve as part of the conceptual structure that frames use to shape meaning in context.

If we think in terms of a certain frame, it will influence what we do and how we do it. As Mark Johnson asserts, image-schematic models (frames) based in analogical reasoning “*constitute* an individual’s understanding of a phenomenon and thereby influence her acts of inference or cooperation. The metaphors, or analogies, are not merely convenient economies for expressing our knowledge; rather, they *are* our knowledge and understanding of the particular phenomena in question” (112; emphasis in original). Take, for instance, the way that political debates are framed using the conceptual metaphor *The Nation is a Family*. George Lakoff shows that conservatives and liberals use this metaphor to construct very different frames for what government should do. While

the family metaphor is consistent across the two frames, other *entailments* vary, leading to variations in the way that people conceptualize the role of government on a number of different issues. The family metaphor fits with the experiences of liberals and conservatives and is linked with metaphors for morality. Conservative morality is characterized by the strict father model, which entails discipline and self-reliance (70). Liberal morality is characterized by the nurturant parent model, which entails empathy and fairness (114). These two different systems of metaphors lead to different ways that social policies like welfare or student loan programs can be framed, i.e., in terms of self-reliance or in terms of fairness. Conservative morality rejects such policies because they do not promote self-reliance, and liberal morality promotes such policies because they strive to create fairness. This is why framing learning in a consistent and specific way is so important. The frames and their analogic entailments will drive the way that teachers and students conceptualize the work involved in learning to write.

Frames for Learning and the Conceptual Metaphor, *Ideas are Objects*

The conflicting differences that occur in the conceptualization of American politics also occur in our collective conceptualization of learning in a writing classroom —though perhaps to a lesser extent. Many of these frames have been analyzed and critiqued already but deserve mention, since as Lakoff and Johnson argue, for important and complex domains of experience, a single conceptual mapping cannot fully allow us to “reason and talk about the experience” (*Philosophy* 71). For instance, teachers of writing will, of course, be familiar with the “banking model.” In the banking model, ideas-as-objects are “passed through” language as if through a conduit (see Reddy, “Conduit Metaphor”) from the teacher and “deposited” in the students’ minds, metaphorized as containers. Paulo Freire’s critique of the banking model is based on a critique of the use of metaphors like *Minds are Containers*, *Ideas are Objects*, *Learning is Receiving*, and *Teaching is Giving*. Freire argues that, “In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (72). Under this conceptualization of learning, instruction is inherently lecture-based, because the lecture format best allows for the transfer of ideas-as-objects. In sum, this system of thought creates a pedagogical environment where the teacher’s job is to share knowledge and the student’s job is to receive and store knowledge.

Certainly most first-year writing instructors have noted the critiques of the dissemination of knowledge and have worked to change the way they teach accordingly.² In some instances, teachers have replaced the banking model with a frame that relies on the metaphor of learning as the act of constructing knowledge, loosely based on Piaget’s theories. There are some real benefits to the constructivist frame when it is compared to

² While the Conduit Metaphor for communication has been roundly critiqued, it’s worth mentioning that it has also been supported by Philip Eubanks, who argues in “Understanding Metaphors for Writing: In Defense of the Conduit Metaphor” and *Metaphor and Writing: Figurative Thought in the Discourse of Written Communication* that the conduit metaphor’s relationship with the metaphor *Language is Power* creates metaphoric entailments of “linguistic accuracy and directness” (*Metaphor and Writing* 162). According to Eubanks, these entailments necessitate the use of the Conduit Metaphor and, in fact, make it preferable.

the banking model. Yet the frame also relies on a conceptual system that defines learning as collecting, ordering, and storing ideas-as-objects. Within the context of both frames, ideas are still objects to be stored in students' minds even though the way the teacher presents the ideas and students store the ideas are different.

Because the constructivist metaphor *Learning is Building/Constructing* is so common, it has permeated educational discourse, framing a number of popular pedagogical theories—theories that talk about the “foundations” of learning, theory-building or theory-construction, classroom “scaffolding,” etc. As a result of its object-based metaphors, the frame leads people to interpret the world as an objective reality that can be broken up into “concrete” parts. When *Learning is Building/Constructing* is employed to frame pedagogic interactions, teaching involves creating an environment designed to help students build a mental object in their own minds through an assembly of its parts. The theory shows that once the student has received the information from the teacher (via the “conduit” of language), the student actively orders that information by stacking it in metaphorically vertical (wall-like) structures. Thus the constructivist metaphor helps to frame learning as consisting of two separate but connected operations: collecting and ordering, with a greater emphasis placed on the ordering operation. The frame leads teachers to create a series of related sub-tasks, beginning with the simplest and working up to more complex tasks, until students have learned the whole concept that comprises the course or sequence of courses. Here we can see that the tasks involved in learning are framed differently from the banking model in that the constructivist metaphor privileges students' ability to form relationships between ideas over the simple collection of ideas. Yet, despite the merits of this conceptual frame, teachers are given the authority to choose which parts to pass on to students, and it is up to students to “rebuild” and mentally store a reconstruction of objective reality. Knowledge under a conceptual frame that employs *Learning is Building/Constructing* is essentially cumulative and is based, among others, on the conceptual metaphor *More is Up*. Thus, under this theory, knowledge “grows” bigger, taller, and stronger over time.

Joseph Williams notes some of the problems of using this frame to think of educational contexts. According to Williams, the constructivist metaphor is part of a broader educational metaphor, the metaphor of growth. The metaphor that Williams is referring to thinks of learning as growing in the way one grows in height, weight, or strength. This growth scale translates into the idea that intellectual development is movement on a graph from lower left to upper right (248). Williams writes that this metaphor allows us to explain a student's failure to learn through his or her previous learning experiences, because “At whatever level, we can blame the failure of our students on those who did not provide them with the foundation, the base[ics] that the student needs to perform at a higher level” (Williams 249; brackets in original). Williams writes that this metaphor can lead to other consequences as well. He argues that reasoning using this metaphor as a frame leads to the conclusion, “Just as getting taller and heavier is something that just happens, intellectual growth seems inevitable; it is what all normal people do. So if a student does not grow, then something may be wrong with the student” (249).

While the way that the metaphoric processes involved in the collection, ordering, and storing differ in these two frames, one constant holds true: in both frames knowledge is characterized as a collection of discrete objects. By reifying ideas in this way, frames that

rely on the metaphor *Ideas are Objects* lead students and teachers to conceptualize what/how they should be learning differently than we might like. Under these two frames, learning is a kind of unproblematic accumulation of the type where more is better.

Moving About: Spatial Frames for Learning

While object-based frames represent a large portion of the way that learning to write is conceptualized, spatial frames for learning are equally as important in the writing classroom context. As with the object-based frames, there are multiple frames that rely on spatial metaphors and that teachers of writing are likely to use—though one's relationship to that space changes, depending on the way that the frame for learning employs the metaphor *Learning is a Journey*. Williams, for instance, offers another metaphor for thinking of learning. Instead of thinking in terms of “higher” and “lower” learning—where we can again see the relevance of the *More is Up* conceptual metaphor—Williams suggests that we might think of learning as “insider” and “outsider” learning, where learners become members of an intellectual community (250). Here the spatial metaphor becomes clear. As part of this frame, learning is conceptualized as travelling to a specific place, a place where like-minded people gather and dwell. Entering this community requires novices to acquire new knowledge and new “habits of thought” (Williams 252). In opposition to the first set of frames that conceptualized ideas as objects, spatial frames rely on the conceptual metaphor *Ideas are Locations*, in addition to metaphors like *The Mind is a Vehicle*, *Learning is a Journey*, *Teaching is Guiding*, and *Discourse is Space*.

In alighting on this metaphor for teaching and learning, Williams has shown his affiliation with the field of composition and rhetoric, its roots firmly planted in Burke's parlor metaphor (110-111) and Bartholomae's notion of “Inventing [and entering] the University” (4). In this frame, based on the metaphor *Discourse is Space*, writing and speaking in a certain way is the act of practicing knowledge in a discipline. Here, we can see the connections to the metaphor that Williams has described. Working within this frame, in order for learning to occur, learners must enter into a community of skilled practitioners and work to adapt their writing and speaking practices—their ways of rhetorically navigating that space—and their habits of mind to the expectations of that community. Furthermore, this metaphor is supported by Linda Flower's research on the construction of negotiated meaning, where she defines literacy as “a move within a discourse practice” (20). Flower, like Williams, calls for a reexamination of the “basics” and suggests that the “new ‘basics’ should start with expressive and rhetorical practices” (25). Beginning with these new basics, Flower sees writing instruction as the process of “helping students enter into a discourse practice, helping them to understand the logic of the practice—who is doing what with whom and why” (25).

While Williams' metaphor of space and Flowers' metaphor of movement may seem like a small stylistic difference, their implications about the way that learning is conceptualized have large repercussions. If learning is “entering into” a new space, the “position” of the learner changes in relation to a group. Here, learning is not about *what* you know but *where* you position yourself in the landscape of ideas and in close proximity to whom. Under this frame, learning is becoming a part of a community, dwelling intellectually near people who are interested in similar subjects and who speak and write about them in similar ways.

Nedra Reynolds also uses this frame to think about learning to write. Reynolds observes that “writers dwell in ideas to make them their own; they squat, intellectually, before moving on” (*Geographies* 141). Thus, there is a shift in the kind of learning that occurs in classroom contexts. Instead of lecture-based or activity-based learning, teaching becomes inherently discussion/ discursive-based. In this frame, learning is about “positioning” your ideas in relation to others, and the only way to do that is through “coming to” an understanding of what and how others think. Thus, the frame addresses first and foremost the role that context plays in learning. Class discussions in a writing course become places where students explore knowledge within the context of a specific community, a practice that they can use to rethink their ideas, showcase the relative proximity of their ideas to others’, and push the boundaries of their community to accept new and related ideas. And so the work of learning under this frame is not the collection of facts, and it’s not the use of skills. Instead, it is characterized by a *tête-à-tête* that establishes and changes distance and proximity. For this reason, learning in this frame is best achieved through the communication of ideas. Thus, students have to communicate ideas with one another and with the teacher, to work through disagreement, and to explore how close or how far apart their ideas are.

Certainly, there is room for contention and disagreement in discursive communities. While the metaphor *Discourse is Space* defines the way that ideas are relatively positioned, we must remember that the space defined in this frame is a bounded space, a space with borders to which admittance is granted or denied—even though those borders are permeable and nebulous. Thus, disagreements and cultural differences are metaphorized as borderlands and contact zones. Mary Louise Pratt argues that contact zones can be useful in setting the activities for pedagogical environments which become

exercises in storytelling and in identifying with the ideas, interests, histories, and attitudes of others; experiments in transculturation and collaborative work and in the arts of critique, parody, and comparison (including unseemly comparisons between elite and vernacular cultural forms); the redemption of the oral; ways for people to engage with suppressed aspects of history (including their own histories); ways to move *into* and *out of* rhetorics of authenticity; ground rules for communication across lines of difference and hierarchy that go beyond politeness but maintain mutual respect; a systematic approach to the all-important concept of *cultural mediation*. (40; emphasis in original)

While Pratt’s original description of a contact zone was an analysis of real, historical spaces, the concept is often used metaphorically as part of spatial frames to describe the ways that ideas conflict in discursive spaces. Reynolds, for example, metaphorizes borderlands and contact zones to conceptualize the work of writing, while at the same time privileging the material conditions of space and the way that people navigate real spaces.³

³ Interestingly, Reynolds’ use of the borderlands concept raises a conflict with Darsie Bowden’s article “The Limits of Containment: Text-as-Container in Composition Studies.” While Reynolds argues that spatial metaphors lead one to frame learning in terms of containers, where borders serve as the container boundaries (*Geographies* 12-13), Bowden argues that framing writing as a community of writers provides an alternative to the container metaphor, with the exception of the pervasive and perhaps unavoidable use of the prepositional in/out binary (Bowden 375).

Despite her use of a frame that employs the journey metaphor, Reynolds has argued that the metaphor for the educational journey is a cliché (*Geographies* 10). And certainly the conceptual metaphor historically has been a part of Western thought, as is evidenced in words such as “curriculum” and “course.” But what’s important about Reynolds’ use of the frame is the way that she critiques and analyzes it. Reynolds not only reminds us to keep in mind the material conditions of movement through space, she also reminds us to employ metaphors with potentially harmful effects very carefully, e.g. “Metaphors of the frontier result from dominant ideologies of space, place, and landscape in the U.S.: the more the better; own as much as possible; keep trespassers off; if it looks uninhabited, it must be” (*Geographies* 30). Despite its clichéd status, this frame for conceptualizing learning based in the journey metaphor is not the preferred frame used in fields other than composition and rhetoric. And in this way, the rhetoric and composition community distinguishes itself from other academic disciplines.

As Judith Langer points out, often teaching a disciplinary discourse takes a back seat to content in college teaching. Langer writes that after reviewing literature on teaching biology, 90-95 percent of the materials still focused on having students memorize course materials (74). Moreover, she notes that similar patterns exist in the two other fields she studied, history and literature (75). The reason, of course, is that these disciplines are dominated by frames that rely on the conceptual metaphor *Ideas are Objects*. Writing scholars, though, see it differently. To them, language *constitutes* the ideas. In other words, writing scholars see knowing as a process of speaking and writing with others, using a shared set of practices about common subjects. This difference can account for some of the differing expectations of students, because their experiences in their other college courses do not prepare them for the way their writing teachers expect them to engage the work of learning to write.

Because she simultaneously employs and critiques the journey frame, Reynolds offers an important examination of the way the frame works in action. Moreover, her work fleshes out the complexities of the frame by accounting for both movement and stagnation. Reynolds shows that we must take into account the way that the lack of movement is figured into the act of spatially framing learning to write. As Eubanks argues in *Metaphor and Writing*, at times conceptual metaphors can work paradoxically to negatively frame their referents by pointing to the limits of the frame, the ways that the frame doesn’t accurately account for the concept (171). Through her negative framing of the journey metaphor, Reynolds has shown us some of the limits of movement as a way to conceptualize learning to write—particularly the exclusionary nature of “travel” as a metaphor. Reynolds shows that the notion of travel is typically limited to those with the privilege to do so. She concludes that “in the ‘real world’ people don’t move around that much”—unless their circumstances displace them (“Who’s Going” 543).

In addition to Reynolds’ argument about the material conditions of space, two major critiques advise against framing learning using spatial metaphors. First, Gregory Clark resists the exclusionary nature of an “insider/outsider” discursive binary. Clark writes in “Writing as Travel, or Rhetoric on the Road” that this binary creates conditions where one of the metaphor’s functions in defining a rhetorical collectivity “is the ongoing territorial project of policing boundaries” (10). Thus, the very notion of a discourse community and the act of learning how to enter it sets up a boundary that defines who belongs

and who does not. But Clark argues that such boundaries not only define who belongs. They also actively exclude ideas from consideration. Thus, Clark suggests that the idea of the discourse community denies “the distinctive humanity” that people enact in social contexts (12).

The second critique focuses less on the role that the “discourse community” plays in the frame and instead focuses on the idea at the heart of the conceptual metaphor on which the frame is based. Patricia Dunn argues that framing learning in terms of discourse actively excludes other knowledge forms: “Generally speaking, Composition believes that writing is not simply *one* way of knowing; it is *the* way” (15; emphasis in original). Dunn suggests that this tradition of concentrating on “word-based epistemologies” blocks out the use of other epistemologies that may be valuable to our students’ thinking and composing processes.

These critiques are not reasons to avoid frames that employ the journey metaphor. Instead, they remind us of the frames’ limitations and point out pitfalls to avoid when using the frames. First, Clark, Bowden, and Reynolds offer excellent reasons to avoid metaphors of contained space. That is, teachers should do their best to avoid the use of metaphors that rely on an insider/outsider binary, with the understanding that a complete elimination of such use is most likely impossible. Instead, teachers should focus on metaphors of proximity by discussing the relative distance between differing ideas and concepts. Second, Dunn and Eubanks remind us also to use the frame in its negative construction—to think about the ways that learning is *not* discursive—in order to help students understand the complexities involved in learning to write.

Diverging Paths: Two Uses of the Journey Metaphor

While “travel” as a metaphor is problematic, as Reynolds has shown, embodied movement through space is a virtually universal experience around which a frame for learning can be formed—especially when Reynolds’ call for an examination of the material conditions of movement are taken into account. The question that remains is the type of movement that should be privileged. Depending on how the metaphor *Ideas are Locations* is combined with other metaphors, different frames for learning will be created. For instance, learning is typically metaphorized as one of two different types of movement. Learning can either be thought of as the movement of a person on a journey or as the movement of a projectile toward a target.

When learning is thought of as the movement of the learner toward a goal, it follows the path schema as described by Mark Johnson, where one begins in an initial state and, through an action sequence, moves to a desired state (115). Examples of these frames in action often can be found in an examination of writing teachers speaking about the work that they do. Take, for instance, the scholars who speak about the work of teaching writing in Todd Taylor’s film *Take 20*. Nedra Reynolds provides one example of the linear path metaphor when she says, “You have to start, of course, with—what are the goals of this course? What are the learning outcomes? Where are we trying to get?” Here Reynolds is thinking of her course as a journey and the learning outcomes as the goal: where the class is trying to get. In this case, the knowledge to be learned is a preset destination. The learning in the class is a journey toward that destination. Often, though, teachers talk

about learning as a journey of exploration, a journey with no clear destination, as in this example from Donald McQuade in *Take 20*:

Teaching writing is encouraging students to take risks and not penalizing them for taking those risks. And once they begin to discover that risk is going to be rewarded, they begin to relax into their ability. So they're going to stretch themselves out much, much farther, and they're going to be willing to explore their own resourcefulness with language a lot more if they're operating in a supportive environment, one which doesn't penalize people for taking risks.

McQuade, in this example, is suggesting that learning is characterized by “exploring” and “stretching oneself”—a combination of two different metaphors *Learning is a Journey* and *Learning is Growing*. Likewise, Donald Bartholomae uses an exploration metaphor to describe the act of learning, when he says in *Take 20*, “And if there's a second third [of the course], I want to continue to [open things up], but I want [students] to feel the power now in their ability to think beyond what are the sort of convenient and comfortable limits of their sentences and essays and paragraphs.” Bartholomae, like McQuade, is suggesting that learning is the act of leaving a comfortable space and striking out for an unknown space by thinking beyond the current limits of their knowledge. McQuade calls this work exploring. Bartholomae calls it thinking beyond “comfortable limits.” In either case, the student is setting out into the unknown with no explicit destination in mind.

The journey metaphor can also be used to think of learning as the movement of a projectile toward a target, a kind of movement that is external to the body, i.e., something else is moving in relation to oneself. Here, a compulsion is added to the path schema, creating a situation where the learner applies force in a specific direction and moves her understanding toward a learning goal. In this case, learning is distanced from a primary embodied state (where the body moves from one position to another), to a secondary embodied state (where the body experiences another object moving relative to the body's position). While still used to conceptualize learning, its use is much less common than the first construction. Andrea Lunsford provides the only example of this metaphor in action that occurred in *Take 20*: “For every writing class I teach, I have two major aims: one is that the students will do some writing, and two, that they will have an opportunity to reflect on what they did so that they know at the end of the class what our aims have been, what stages we have gone through, and what they should be taking away from the class.” In this example, Lunsford is analogizing the work of learning in the class as “aiming”: knowledge is the target. In this example, she also uses the metaphor of a person on a journey, when she uses the phrase “what stages we have gone through” to describe the learning that has taken place in the class. Thus, in this example, one might say that it is the course itself that serves as the compulsion that propels students along their path toward knowledge.

These two metaphors frame the act of learning differently, despite their shared use of the metaphor *Ideas are Locations*—and thus, they will have different implications to the way that writing is taught and the way it is interpreted by learners. This difference has to do with the amount (and kind) of guidance offered by the teacher. When the metaphor entails a journey of exploration, the teacher sets conditions where students are given the

chance to experiment with their writing. Curiosity is the driving force, and the direction and scope of learning is largely selected by the student. The teacher's role in this frame is to help the student through particularly difficult parts, to encourage a particular kind of curiosity that will serve as the reason for the journey, and to suggest directions that might be particularly fruitful for the student. In short, the teacher serves as a guide along the way. When a compulsion is added to the metaphor, then the journey/ movement is much more directed. There is a set goal (or goals), and the teacher compels the motion of the course toward those goals. While Lunsford's example above suggests that the students are moving toward the goal in her conceptualization, which is evident in the way that she uses the two journey metaphors together, the compulsion metaphor typically suggests movement that is secondary to the student. That is, knowledge of the course is moving in relation to the student, as opposed to the student moving.

Thinking of knowledge as a location in discursive space has its limitations, as do all metaphoric constructions. When dealing with conceptual metaphors and the frames they create, the question is not which one is objectively "right." Each expresses truth, to a certain extent, and each is limited, because the metaphors help us to actively select and focus our attention on specific aspects of a system of ideas. The purpose of studying and identifying which metaphors we use should be to find the ones that best fit our value systems. Finding the right metaphors to fit with the values of rhetoric and composition, scholars will help create new and productive ways to think about and discuss the complex environment of the composition classroom.

Overlapping Frames: Learning as a Journey and Writing as a Journey

Wherever possible, I have restricted myself to discussing the way that *learning* to write is framed and have avoided discussing the way that *writing* is framed. This is a tenuous, but I believe, important distinction of which writing teachers should be aware. While Reynolds offers an excellent critique and analysis of the metaphors connected to dwelling and moving through space, the referents for the metaphors that she examines slip from time to time between learning and writing. The frame for education/learning that we have been discussing is one way she employs the metaphors and can be summed up as follows:

- Discourse is a space where learners move about.
- Original and new ideas are particular locations within the larger discursive space.
- Learners travel through discursive space, in order to understand by means of interaction.
- Interaction helps learners understand the proximity between similar ideas and situate their own ideas in geographic relation to others' ideas.

Therefore, at times, Reynolds discusses learning as dwelling or journey, e.g., "If movement seems essential to learning or persuasion, I will suggest that inhabitation or dwelling are equally important" (4). At other times she discusses writing as dwelling e.g., "In mapping some sites where spatial practices of dwelling and composing come together in both exhilarating and frustrating senses of space, I try to show that dwelling as *metaphor*

is helpful in re-imagining acts of writing in *material* ways even though the relationship is a messy one" (140; emphasis in original).

Since the two concepts are so interconnected, it is difficult to parse out the differences. However, Dunn's critique helps us see the reason that the distinction is often elided in the use of *Learning is a Journey*. Dunn's argument that the field of Composition sees writing as *the* way of knowing, rather than one way, explains why writing's metonymic relationship to learning is unconsciously glossed over. Therefore, we often overlook the fact that writing is *not* the only way of learning. It is only analogous to other ways of learning, if we define analogy as constituted of all tropological discourse. This metonymic relationship between writing and learning accounts for the field's tacit use of what might be a conceptual metaphor unique to the field of Composition: *Writing is Learning*. Lakoff and Johnson show that conceptual metaphors grow out of embodied relationships, such as the relationship between warmth and affection or physical exertion and difficulty (*Philosophy* 50). As writers, we have an embodied relationship with the act of writing—the physical act of typing a draft or penning a manuscript. Furthermore, we have noticed that this embodied act leads to new insights or understanding. Thus, unconsciously, an analogical relationship is formed between the two. The result is that Composition as a discipline has created a Venn diagram for learning, where the concepts of learning and writing overlap to create "writing to learn" and more generally *Writing is Learning*. When the two concepts are used in overlapping ways, they become a kind of meta-frame, where metaphors for writing stand in for metaphors for learning, adding an additional degree of analogical reference.

This conceptualization of learning, then, drives the way that learning is framed in writing classes. Since the distinction between writing and learning is unconsciously elided, writing and learning transform into one and the same concept. That is, when the conceptual metaphor *Writing is Learning* is used as part of a frame for learning in the writing classroom, a simplistic relationship emerges for learning and writing so that the frame suggests that *all* writing leads to learning. Now, it is clear that writing often leads to learning. I have learned quite a bit by drafting this essay, for instance. However, if you pause for a second, as I find myself doing while I write this, and think, "Of course all writing leads to learning," take a moment to reconsider. Experiment. Write a word or a sentence at random and consider what you have learned. Perhaps you can make the logical leap that you have learned something from what you have written, but does learning necessarily have to take place whenever we write? I would argue no. Thus, we must also consider the limitations of the *Writing is Learning* metaphor as it pertains to the way that it helps to frame learning to write.

In addition, we should be aware that there are two different ways to conceptualize writing: (1) written communication and (2) writing processes that entail different (but very similar) metaphors for representing each of these mental processes. Reynolds' analysis also slips between these two referents at times. Again, while these referents are closely related and at times connected, the two are distinct entities that should be conceptualized separately. When thinking of framing, it is important to remember that conceptual metaphors can function in multiple ways, simply because they offer differently contextualized ways for us to process information. Therefore, it is important when theorizing the use of frames and conceptual metaphors to distinguish between the different ways they can be used. This is

especially true when discussing closely related and interconnected mental processes. As I have suggested, while the journey metaphor is used to conceptualize and frame learning, it is also often used to conceptualize and frame written communication and writing processes.

Under the frame for written communication that employs the journey metaphor, the following mappings occur in our thinking, talking, and writing:

- Text is a space through which the writer and the reader travel.
- A rhetorical purpose is a path through the text-as-space, leading to a particular idea that serves as a viewpoint/ point of view, a place from which the reader can see the world from the vantage of the writer.
- Either the writer guides the reader through the text or the writer journeys toward the reader. Under the first scenario, effective communication occurs when the reader is able to “follow along.” Ineffective communication occurs when the reader “gets lost.” Under the second scenario, effective communication occurs when the writer is able to “meet” the reader “where he or she is.” Ineffective communication occurs when the writer “passes the reader by.”

Likewise, the writing process can be framed, using the journey metaphor. The difference is subtle but important. Under this frame the following metaphoric mappings are used to think, talk, and write about the composition process:

- The writing process is a space through which the writer travels.
- Completion of the writing task is the writer’s aim.
- Success occurs when the writer reaches her destination, and failure occurs when the writer’s path is blocked or obstructed.

Clearly, all three metaphoric mappings are similar, but I would argue that it is important to keep them distinct. Each uses the same general metaphoric structure but maps it on to different concepts that have to do with the different activities of a writing classroom. I have presented all three to highlight the differences between the ways the metaphors are used for different purposes in different frames, though sometimes in the same context.⁴

Entwined with our job of teaching writing, then, is the task of changing students’ conceptualization of the tasks we assign and their approaches to learning through those tasks. As Donald Murray characterizes it, “a process of unlearning has to take place” (174). This unlearning process is not about re-examining approaches to writing learned in high school. It’s about helping students to see the act of learning differently, to reorient them to a new way of thinking about what the act of learning entails. Succeeding in this venture will allow students to understand better what is expected of them in courses like first-year writing and will lead students to understand better how to succeed in the course. While helping students to see the course from the teacher’s perspective will be helpful for students, it should be noted that consistent framing will not necessarily result in student

⁴ For a fuller account of how the journey metaphor can be used to frame of the composition process, see Bruce Erickson’s dissertation “Before Beyond: A Study of a Para-Pedagogy Which Uses Discovery and De-Mystification to Re-Visit First-Year College Composition.”

success—though in some cases student success may be attributed to a shift in framing. Just because a student is better equipped to understand a specific learning task does not mean that he or she can successfully complete it. However, shared framing does better equip students to understand why they have succeeded or failed. In short, consistent framing has the potential to remove some of the confusion from learning environments so that the learning process can proceed more smoothly.



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