Second half part of the apple

Friendship metaphors in second language writing

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This article investigates the use of friendship metaphors in texts by adult second language writers, in relation to the occurrence and function of metaphor and the writers' discursive constructions of identity. The texts come from the final assessment in Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), a language program in basic Swedish. The analysis confirmed the initial assumption that the emotional and existentially loaded theme of *friendship* allows for the use of metaphor. The results also showed that the experience of writers as newcomers in Sweden played out in the metaphors that were used and their contexts.

In order to categorize the found metaphors, a model was developed to show how *systematic metaphors* reflect functions and values related to three thematic categories: *guidance and help, belonging and inclusion*, and *sharing and solidarity*. For several metaphors, the metaphoricity was created through novel and unidiomatic wording, i.e. a kind of neologism that can be considered a communication strategy.

The importance of using universal and abstract themes in language testing is emphasized, to enable second language writers to express different facets of experience and knowledge through existential thoughts and attitudes – not only as language learners and newcomers, but also as social agents who create and keep transnational relations through friends.

Keywords: second language writing, friendship, systematic metaphors, linguistic creativity, metaphor as strategy, language testing

1. Introduction

Figurative language is usually not a prominent focus in basic second language education, which instead tends to favour functional communicative language. However, metaphor is an important aspect of second language learning for understanding and using the new language efficiently and creatively (Littlemore &

Low, 2006; Sabet & Tavakoli, 2016). Metaphor can enable meaning-making (cf. Hasan, 2007) even with a limited, everyday vocabulary (Hoang, 2019; MacArthur, 2010). Further, it has often been observed that second language users produce metaphors that differ from those conventionally used by native speakers (Pitzl, 2017). Although research on metaphor from a second language perspective is an established field of research, there are no existing methodological approaches to evaluate these kinds of neologisms. This can, particularly in relation to language assessment, create difficulties. There seem to be two positions one can choose to take: that language deviating from a standardized norm can be regarded as "foreign" and, perhaps, "wrong", or that it contributes to linguistic creativity (Pitzl, 2018). Here, we adopt the second position.

In the present article, we explore adult second language learners' use of metaphors. The texts come from a national test in Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), used as the final assessment of the SFI language program. The SFI test has a gatekeeping function, in that students must pass the test to continue on to subsequent courses or exit SFI with a grade (Ahlgren & Rydell, 2020). Testing practices represent an institutionalized communicative situation and social practice in which learners are supposed to demonstrate their target language knowledge and claim legitimacy as "competent language users" (Rydell, 2018). In a Swedish context, such tendencies have been observed in the oral part of the SFI test, showing that learners in their spoken performance were indexing images of themselves as "good students" and "good immigrants" (Rydell, 2018). Thus, the learners were reflecting dominant ideological discourses on language and integration, which hold the learners responsible for their learning processes and for finding Swedish conversation partners to improve their language skills (ibid.). Previous research has also shown that testing practices often promote and confirm subject positions and learner identities (Jörgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen & Møller, 2011).

The texts produced in the task chosen for this study concern the writers' experiences and reflections on *friendship*, a theme that in language testing is considered "neutral", but is still engaging (cf. Bachman, 1990), in the sense that it does not evoke sensitive experiences, but instead promotes the use of a language of emotions. Thus, it can be assumed to enhance figurative language and metaphor density (Golden, 2017, this issue), and, by extension, reflection on self and sometimes also on agency (see further below).

In this article, imagery is analysed as *systematic metaphor*, as proposed by Cameron (2004, 2008) and Cameron et al. (2009). We stress the context-sensitive, dynamic nature of this approach, including its openness to the language users' expressions of self. Cameron's framework also makes it possible to attend to the actual wording of the metaphors. Thus, we attend to the wording of the actual instance, including wordings that deviate from standard Swedish. Friendship

metaphors are analysed in relation to the writers' narrated experiences (De Fina, 2015) of being and having a friend, and of being a migrant and a newcomer in Sweden as well as a language learner and a test taker. To elucidate linguistic creativity in second language writing, we discuss the communicative value of *living metaphors* (Ricœur, 1975). More specifically, the aim is to investigate the use of friendship metaphors in texts written by adult second languages learners, in relation to the occurrence and function of metaphor and the writers' discursive constructions of identity. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What systematic metaphors are used to express the theme of friendship in the writing produced in SFI tests, and what functions do the metaphors have?
2. How do the writers position themselves in relation to friends, and what discursive identities are constructed in the imagery and its textual contexts?
3. To what extent is the language learner context and test situation actualized?

2.   Theoretical framings and previous research

2.1   Metaphor in second language writing

Somewhat contradictory to observations of second language writing being characterized by simplicity (Hinkel, 2003), second language texts have, in some studies, been reported to use figurative language extensively. Further, studies have come to different conclusions regarding the relation between grades and figurative language in second language writing. In a study of texts written by students using English as an additional language (EAL), Cameron and Besser (2004) found that the texts most dense in figurative language were written by EAL students, i.e. more than those written by first language students. Similarly, the quantity of metaphorical expressions in texts written by English language learners for Cambridge ESOL examinations was found to be an indication of their writing proficiency, particularly when the metaphors were well chosen and appropriate (Littlemore, Krennmayer, Turen & Turner, 2014). Yet, metaphors produced by second language learners often deviate from idiomatic expressions and may stand out as novel to target language speakers. Cameron and Besser (2004) found that EAL texts had more "mistakes" in accuracy and appropriacy related to metaphor than texts by first language students, and often were innovative, e.g. "hair brown as soil" and "time flew by like a pigeon" (2004, p. 71f.). This kind of linguistic creativity, which in a second language might be involuntary, and the result of a lack of idiomatic alternatives (cf. Ekberg, 1997, 2004; Prentice, 2010), may be perceived as errors (e.g. Nacey, 2013), or can give colour to and embellish texts.

Nevertheless, according to Littlemore and Low (2006), the ability to understand and produce figurative language is essential to achieving higher levels of competence in a second language. Even for learners with a limited vocabulary, metaphor is a powerful tool for creating new meaning (MacArthur, 2010). Whereas MacArthur (2010) sees metaphor as a successful communication strategy, Littlemore and Low (2006) warn second language writers about the risk of using metaphor in high-stake situations, since correctness and idiomaticity are often fundamental to the results, and "foreignness" and neologisms may be a disadvantage.

Earlier studies of multilingual speakers' figurative language use have observed that metaphors can be the result of *novel constructions* or different kinds of *modified conventionalized metaphors*, i.e. lexico-grammatical and sematic-pragmatic modifications (Prentice, in this issue). Also, it has been pointed out that the use of metaphor in a non-conventional ways can be *intentional*, with a possible poetical aspiration, or *accidental*, especially in a multilingual context, where it may reflect the linguistic repertoire of the language user (Pritzl, 2017). Moreover, the use of innovative metaphors seems to depend on "individual preference" (Golden, 2017, p. 208) and personal dispositions towards novelty (Birdsell, 2018). How to measure the degree of creativity in figurative language has also been an issue in research, since metaphor is not a unitary construct, but one that is dynamic and individualistic (Ahlgren, 2014). In this sense, a conventional metaphor construction, which is also referred to as "dead", can become an innovative and *living metaphor* (Ricœur, 1975) when used in a new situation. Furthermore, a metaphor that is considered dead in one language or culture is not necessarily dead in another. Thus, there are several aspects that decide what constitutes a creative metaphor.

2.2 Friendship metaphors and a systematic theoretical framework

Previous research on friendship metaphor has been performed through the lens of cognitive metaphor theory (CMT), by exploring the relationship between body, language and mind (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Kövesces (1995, 2000) found that friendship metaphors emanated from a relatively small number of concepts. The metaphorical mapping was based on conceptual structures such as EXPERI-ENCES ARE OBJECTS and PEOPLE ARE CONTAINERS. People's previous experiences were, for instance, constructed as objects that could be shared, exchanged and possessed, or a person could open herself up to allow a friend to look inside (Kövesces, 2000). In relation to interaction, friendship was constructed as an ECO-NOMIC EXCHANGE, which includes the idea of *giving* and *taking* and the topics *helping* and *receiving help*. The conceptual metaphors that emerged from the sys-

tems EMOTION IS DISTANCE and EMOTION IS TEMPERATURE construct friendship as consisting of close or warm friends, and mostly in positively loaded terms (Kövesces, 1995).

In the present article, we are not interested in matching such cognitive models, which are designed to classify universal underlying structures of thinking. Rather, imagery is analysed as *systematic metaphor*, as proposed by Cameron (2007, 2008) and constitutes a "discourse dynamics approach" to metaphor analysis (Cameron et al., 2009). We take this dynamic perspective on the mapping of metaphor as especially relevant in second language contexts. Central to this approach are the concepts *tenor* (the subject of the metaphor) and *vehicle* (words or phrases that describe the semantic content, e.g. the image that embodies the subject of the metaphor). In the analysis of systematic metaphors, a set of *metaphor vehicles* is identified that are semantically connected and organized into groups according to topic. The result is an extended systematic mapping between topic domains and a particular vehicle domain, called "systematic metaphor". In our analysis (see further Section 5.2), an example of a systematic metaphor is *FRIENDSHIP IS SUPPORT*. This systematic metaphor regroups *linguistic metaphors* (e.g. metaphorical expressions found in the SFI texts) that refer to the topic friendship in terms of _advisor_ or _support system_.

Cameron et al. (2009) defy notions of *linguistic metaphor* as an instantiation from thought to language as assumed within CMT. Instead, they suggest that the relation is "one of interaction between language and thinking" and that "what is said both reflects and affects thinking" (p. 68). Systematic metaphors may look like conceptual metaphors but need not originate from, or be instantiations of, conceptual metaphors. Instead, they are considered "metaphors in language use" (Cameron et al., 2009, p. 71). Our interest centres on the role of metaphor in natural language use and its functions in discourse (cf. Zanotto, Cameron & Cavalcanti, 2008), including how metaphor evolves in texts "to suit [people's] purposes and goals" (Zanotto, Cameron & Cavalcanti, 2008, p. 3).

To a greater extent than CMT, the framework proposed by Cameron (2007, 2008; Cameron et al., 2009) is sensitive to the influence of the context of the speaker/writer, both the situation in which metaphors are used and in terms of the identity of the speaker/writer. They are empirically motivated "relative to a particular socio-cultural group or discourse community" (Cameron, 2008, p. 171) and "the specifics of the language-using situation" (Cameron et al., 2009, p. 63). Methodologically, Cameron et al. (2009) suggest that metaphors should be studied in context for their discourse-semantic function and the meaning-making to which they contribute (cf. Hasan, 2007). For our purposes, we also find it fruitful to stay close to actual wording and, as proposed by Cameron (2008), "find a valid description of how ideas are talked about" (p. 172).

Apropos the learning and use of metaphor in a second language, Cameron (2003) points out that, although some conceptual metaphors may be the same in different languages, the lexicogrammatical wording will often differ. Thus, what is conventionalized (Cameron, 2003, p.100, 268) may apply differently in learner data, implying that a wording may be "novel" to the listener/reader but not necessarily to the language learner. We take this as important methodologically, as what is conceived of as a metaphor to us may not have been perceived as such by the writer.

2.3   Performed identities, positioning and agency

We analyse identity as being constructed in interaction, meaning that identities emerge through discursive processes in which people create and *perform* images of themselves (De Fina, 2015). Such *performed identities* reflect a dynamic interplay between life, experience and imagination, and can differ in relation to the context they relate to. Further, they do not necessarily represent a coherent self, but indicate "multiple facets of personal identity" (Deppermann, 2015, p.370).

As proposed by De Fina (2015), the narrator's identity in the *storytelling world* is distinct from the character's identity in the *story world*, i.e. the world created in the narratives. Moreover, the actualized aspects of identity may be both "transportable" and "situational" (De Fina, 2015, p.359). The former refers to identities "independent from particular contexts", such as social class or gender, whereas the latter are "made relevant by specific social situations and activities" (De Fina, 2015, p.359). Analytically, focus may be directed towards transportable identities or towards identities that are actualized by the narrator in a specific context. In the present study, we investigate whether migrant or newcomer identities, as well as language learner/test-taker identities, are performed and played out as situational identities in the texts.

In the study of identity from a narrative perspective, agency is essential (Bruner, 1990), here understood as "the sociocultural mediated capacity to act" (Ahearn, 2001, p.109). As outlined by Deppermann (2015), there are, however, different approaches to the relation between performed identities and discourses. In the present article, we adhere to the notion that agency is constrained by dominant discourses, which may limit possibilities for people to make decisions, engage and act as social agents. However, we consider agency to depend also on people's consciousness and free will, allowing for "world- and self-making" (Bruner, 2001, p.25).

3.   The SFI context

Every newly arrived adult resident in Sweden has the right to participate in basic language training, Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), which is state-funded and free of charge. SFI promotes communicative language proficiency and aims to prepare language learners for "daily societal and working life and for continuing studies" (National Agency for Education, 2017). Due to globalization and the significant increase in immigration Sweden has experienced in recent years, the number of students enrolled in the SFI program has gradually increased, 200,000 students being registered in 2018 (National Agency for Education, 2019). The population is heterogeneous in terms of first language, cultural background, age, education and language learning experience. Currently, the dominant countries of origin are Syria, Eritrea, Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan; about 18% of the students have less than seven years of schooling.

SFI is organized as four different courses (A–D), of which the "D course" represents the highest competence level, corresponding to level B1+ on the CEFR scale. Theoretically, the test is framed in communicative competence theory (e.g. Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, 2007). The language descriptions are inspired by CEFR (Ahlgren, 2016). In the theoretical framework for the test, figurative language is not emphasized, nor is it in the CERF framework (cf. Nancy, 2013).

Until recently, the prompts for the writing part of the test offered topics related to civic life and to everyday phenomena, such as writing a (fictional) formal letter to civic officials or composing a message addressed to a person the writer knows. In the past several years, such prompts have been expanded to include tasks pertaining to more personal matters such as friendship. These allow for the expression of emotions and reflections, and possibly for more creative language use (e.g. Golden, 2017, this issue).

An advantage of studying this kind of data is that language tests provide access to long and coherent texts by second language writers in a controlled context, in which it can be assumed that the test takers are performing, or at least trying to perform, their best. As mentioned above, a test setting is, however, a specific context of situation (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) that involves an unequal power relation between students and assessors (McNamara, 2001; Shohamy, 2011), and also creates the potential for stress due to writing on command and with time limitations. Yet, it is important for students to master communicative situations where certain linguistic norms are expected, as "competent language users" (e.g. Rydell, 2018). Further, self-censure and the need to present and position oneself is not unique to test situations.

4.   Data collection and analysis

The data consist of 88 text samples of about 200 words from the SFI test, course D. These texts were collected in regular pretesting proceedings of the test in four Swedish schools 2018–2019. The candidates were chosen so as to be representative of the test population. The setting was the same as in a high-stake situation, implying the texts were written by hand, and no dictionaries or student collaborations were allowed. The writing prompt required the students to write about friendship from a personal perspective, including their own experiences and preferences. The prompt was formulated as a request to write about 'a good friend' and explain why it is important 'to have friends in life'.

In the first step of analysis, figurative language related to friendship was excerpted. In line with Cameron and Besser (2004), we used a broad definition of metaphor, to include hyperbole and simile, in which the comparison being made was metaphorical rather than literal. In order to be considered, the creative imagery had to make sense and be useful for this particular context. In 66 of 88 texts, we found at least one metaphoric expression related to the friendship theme, and often several. To keep the context active through the analysis (cf. Cameron, 2009), metaphors were extracted at the micro-level context, i.e. the sentence or in the paragraph. This included both conspicuous figurative language and conventionalized, "dead" metaphors. Metaphors were taken at "face value", that is, we did not 'translate' deviating lexicogrammatical realizations to idiomatic Swedish correspondences but analysed the imagery created through the actual realizations. Thus, figurative language was explored in terms of the images it evokes, without being evaluated in relation to idiomaticity or "correctness" (cf. Section 2). Nor did we relate the metaphors identified to metaphors in other languages, with the result that imagery that appears innovative to us may possibly be the result of crosslinguistic influence.

Instances of figurative language were not counted. Since identifying underlying structures of thinking was not our aim, we did not consider every instance of recurring figurative language. Instead, we were interested in the variety of metaphoric language use, as well as the ideas, values and attitudes, of this particular group of writers. Nor did we take into account students' first languages or other linguistic resources they might have.

The metaphors were first classified inductively according to the functions in the textual contexts. We attended to the functions that the metaphors fulfilled in relation to the writers' purposes (cf. Zenatto et al., 2008), for example, to describe particular friends in a rather concrete way, relate to friendship as an idea or abstraction, or to relate what friends do to each other.

Agency (Ahern, 2001) turned out to be important, for example, whether writers construed themselves as giving or receiving. In relation to agency, we also attended to what participant roles, as defined by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), were realized by the narrator, his/her friend and friendship. For example, the narrator could construe herself as the Senser, i.e. the one who feels something, or as the object of emotions, without an agency of herself in relation to the emotions, but rather exposed to these. An important lexicogrammatical means for the latter construction is *grammatical metaphor* (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), which allows for semantic qualities and processes to take on nominal functions such as Actor or Goal in the clause, for example: *friendship gives a lot to me*. In such constructions, the Senser of the real-world event can, for example, be construed as the Object and Goal of the process. A considerable share of metaphors concerned, further, what the friend did, or what an *us* did together. In these, the metaphoric element was often expressed in a verb.

In a second step of analysis, all linguistic friendship metaphors – that is, the same metaphors as in the first step of analysis of the functions of the metaphors – were classified based on the imagery of the vehicle terms, in order to distinguish systematic metaphors, in an iterative interpretative coding process. These vehicle groupings (both single words and phrases) are the basic unit of analysis of patterned systematicity across the data.

This systematic categorization was done according to the topic domains of the linguistic metaphors and resulted in six systematic metaphors (displayed in Table 1, Section 5.2). Further, these systematic metaphors were analysed in relation to migration and united into three major thematic categories, e.g. *guidance and help, belonging and inclusion* and *sharing and solidarity*. Our point of departure was that metaphors often belong to different groups, and their meanings are open to new interpretations (Cameron, 2007, p. 205 refers to a "temporary stabilisation"). Hence, our approach was interpretative and hermeneutic with no "closed" results in the coding process, implying that classification could shift. For example, among our categories, a *body part* is arguably also an *element of nature*, and a *family member* implies *support*. We expected the theme to include both *friendship* and *friend*, but the latter dominated in our data.

The idea of *giving* and *receiving* (which we related to agency, as stated above) recurred in local contexts of the friend/friendship metaphors. The local context was also used in our analyses of migration. Here, we paid attention to whether the friend/friendship was situated in Sweden or in another country, or whether it was pictured in generalizing terms without specification of country. Consequently, vehicle terms occurred in contexts of *here/there* (in relation to migration), and as *for me/for someone else, for us* (in relation to giving/receiving). Finally, we considered whether writers' experiences of being language learners

and the situational context of the test situation were actualized. In such cases, the transportable identities (cf. De Fina, 2015) *migrant/newcomer* were possibly realized in the story world. When a *writer* is referred to below, the narrator of the story world is designated.

5.   Findings and analysis

In the following, we first present functions of found metaphors in their textual context, i.e. what aspects of friends and friendship that the metaphors describe. Thereafter, thematic categories of metaphors are demonstrated, i.e. linguistic metaphors systematically related to each other. The systematic metaphors are subsequently discussed in relation to migration.

5.1   Functions of metaphors

In the texts examined, metaphors generally occurred in contexts when the narrator described a friend or friendship. More precisely, metaphors occurred in definitions of friends and friendship, characterizations of specific friends, and descriptions of life with or without friends. An important dimension in all of these uses involved giving and receiving (possibly reflecting the conceptualization FRIENDSHIP IS ECONOMIC EXCHANGE, cf. Kövesces, 2000). It indicates what the friend does (for me) in the story world (De Fina, 2015), what I do (for the friend), or what the friend and I do for each other. As for agency, the type *what I do for the friend* only occurred in a few instances, indicating that friendship was construed as being about receiving, or about what *we* create together or do for each other. Thus, the friend as a giver, and her good qualities and personality, was foregrounded, with *me* (the writer) as receiver and beneficiary, or as the friend and *I* creating something larger than *me*. The "self-making" (Bruner, 2001) was thus as a receiver of assistance. One of the few examples of *me* as giver reinforced this tendency of a certain humbleness in *me*. In Example (1), *I* actually was not represented as giving the friend something, but as giving something to herself, thanks to friendship.

(1)   Friendship is important in my life because [I] gave *myself* important things

Thus, the narrator did not represent herself as giving the friend something. This general tendency in the data of the narrator being receivers of "things" can be interpreted as a manifestation of modesty. It can also be explained by the formulation of the writing prompt, in which the writers were explicitly asked to portray a good friend. Moreover, it may also be related to agency, being a consequence of

writers' vulnerable position as newcomers in Sweden, in need of assistance of others.

The verb *to give* (Sw. *att ge*) is, not surprisingly, common in contexts where friend/friendship gives something, for example, *help, motivation, my best attempts, good information in my life, joy in our lives, an idea that changed my life*. The things given are often realized as grammatical metaphors (cf. Section 4 above), in the form of nominalization (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; e.g. *help, motivation, attempt*). Another recurrent verb is *to stand* or *be there* (Sw. *att stå, vara där*), in metaphors of physical closeness, as in Examples (2) and (3).

(2)   Friends who support us and <u>stand</u> beside us to go over life problems

(3)   The problems come and go but good friends <u>are there</u> for a lifetime

Types involving what *we* do for each other are illustrated in Example (4), representing the importance attributed to friendship, in this case how *we carry* each other's joy and sorrow, or, as in Example (5), exemplifying *life without friends*, how friends carry each other's burdens.

(4)   We can confidently discuss about some things and talk and when we are happy, motionlessly sad <u>carry</u> with those who are close

(5)   I think that when you live alone it means that <u>one keeps a heavy thing on one-self</u>, then it would be better <u>if someone agrees</u> with oneself

Definitions of what a friend *is* or *does*, as well as characterizations of specific friends, are the most common type in the data, generally being of the type that will be treated thoroughly below in relation to themes of metaphors.

5.2   Thematic categories and systematic metaphors

Six major groups of systematic metaphors emerged in the analysis, regrouping linguistic metaphors that describe friends/friendships in terms of (1) SUPPORT, (2) SECURITY, (3) FAMILY, (4) CHANGE, (5) HUMAN BODY, (6) ELEMENT OF NATURE. These systematic metaphors were united into three major thematic categories, reflecting different aspects of the writers' narrated experience of migration, described in the textual context of the linguistic metaphors:

1.   metaphors related to guidance and help in life,
2.   metaphors associated with belonging and inclusion in the social world,
3.   metaphors related to sharing and solidarity.

Table 1 provides an overview of these thematic categories and the systematic metaphors we discerned in the analysis. This model also includes examples of lin-

guistic metaphors (commented on in the following analysis); only the metaphor vehicles are listed.

Table 1. Thematic categories (bold characters) and systematic metaphors (majuscules and in italic)

Guidance and help		Belonging and inclusion		Sharing and solidarity	
A FRIEND/FRIENDSHIP IS…					
SUPPORT	*SECURITY*	*FAMILY*	*CHANGE*	*HUMAN BODY*	*ELEMENT OF NATURE*
stand beside us	old shoes	a sister	can change your life	a part of self outside my body	a flower
	my favourite things	an older sister	can save life	a part that I can have a connection with all the time	gold
my support system		a dear sis			clean water
	happy things		influence life		my second half
a good advisor		more than a brother	life	a shoulder when you want to cry	part of the apple
			know life		
stood next to me		the family that we choose		a hand to hold on to	
standing beside you		a sibling			
		another family			

5.2.1   Guidance and help

In this category, we have identified metaphors with an instrumental function evoking the role of friendship as guidance and help. Many of these linguistic metaphors reflect a rather concrete need for assistance in everyday life, related to decision taking or reassurance. The systematic metaphor *FRIENDSHIP IS SUPPORT* reflects the importance of having friends for enduring hard times in life and making important choices. One writer describes the need for *friends who <u>stand beside us</u> to overcome life problems until we solve them*. Another writer describes the need for help from friends to cope with doubts, as in Example (6).

(6)   I'm always confused and afraid to make any decision. She [the friend] usually helps me think and choose a better choice. She is <u>my support system</u>.

The same function of support is also designated in a found metaphor describing a friend as *a good advisor*. The textual context of these metaphors evokes feelings of insecurity, anxiety and even fear (*life problems, confused and afraid*). Occasionally, there were also metaphors illustrating the importance of support also in joyful situations, as revealed in Example (7).

(7)   She stood next to me when I felt sad and when I felt happy. […] How to live if you have no person standing beside you.

The conceptualization *A FRIEND IS SECURITY* regroups linguistic metaphors representing friends as known and familiar as well as related to positive emotions of contentment and consolation. A friend is a well-known and long-lasting object, as when one is compared to well-worn shoes: *old shoes and old friends are most comfortable.* Intrinsic in these constructions is the conceptualization *A FRIEND IS AN OBJECT* (cf. Kövecses, 2000), which can be *had, got* and *possessed*. In Example (8) below, the writer refers to a friend as something that may be *saved* and picked up when needed:

(8)   I left my homeland Syria three years ago but I saved my favourite things in my brain. One of these happy things is my friend. She was closest to me, I loved her very much as I found her when all people disappeared. She helped me when all people disappeared, when all people said no to me.

Example (8) illustrates the friend being textually situated *there*, in this case in Syria. The writer is the *receiver* of the friend's support. Through metaphor, this very important friend is, however, brought with the writer on the migration journey, in times of turmoil, in an act of strong agency (cf. Ahern, 2001).

5.2.2   Belonging and inclusion

In this category the listed metaphors reflect an affectional relationship to a person, a smaller group of people or a community/society, defined as belonging to the social world. Belonging is a complex emotional process related to inclusion, which cannot be separated from non-belonging and exclusion (Anthias, 2016; Holzberg et al., 2018). It may therefore be particularly relevant for displaced people.

The conceptualization *A FRIEND IS A FAMILY MEMBER* reflects the idea of a friend being *a sibling*. In several texts this relation was specified as, for instance, *a sister, an older sister* or *a dear sister*, or even transcending a family relation: *he is more than a brother*. The conceptualization of friends as family reflects strong emotions, reflecting, ideally, the unconditional love of and belonging to other people. The image may be related to having left the family behind, as revealed in Example (9).

(9)   I miss my family and she knows it and is always with me [...] friends are <u>the family that we choose</u> to be with us.

The friend in this example is embedded in a *here* context and is allotted roles of the original family. This way of comparing friends with family members could also reveal alternative ways of creating new structures of belonging in contemporary society, as illustrated by Example (10), in which friends are 'chosen family'.

(10)   At present, we live in a world where a friend could be <u>a sibling</u> [...] good friends are like <u>another family</u>. Friends are <u>family that you choose</u> yourself.

The agency of the *I* of the story world is generally high in this kind of family metaphor, as closeness and affection are construed in the new country of residence. Notably, friends are constructed as sisters and brothers, and not as fathers and mothers, mirroring relational equality rather than dependence and hierarchy.

Imagery categorized as *CHANGE* is often realized in the verb, and related to *friend/friendship* indirectly, depicting what friendship does or implies to life in the story world, as in the following examples: *a friend <u>can change your live</u>; good friends <u>can save life</u>; friends <u>influence life</u>*. In these, friends exert agency and transform the life of the receiver. In Example (11), the writer does not "know life" without friends, a creative construction that is not conventionalized in Swedish.

(11)   <u>Do you know life</u> without friend? Or life alone? I do not think one <u>knows life</u> without friends as friends always help each other and life becomes easier with them [...] I love [my friend] and I <u>do not know life</u> without her.

In one text, the proverbial expression "No man is an island" was found (originally from the 17th century poet John Donne), which, like Example (11), concerns the loneliness of a life without friends.

5.2.3   Sharing and solidarity

In this category, the metaphors reflect the importance of sharing life with others and doing things together. We have also included metaphors designating unity, mutual dependence and solidarity in friendship, which give a deeper meaning to life. Some instances even reflect the idea that a friend is something magical.

The systematic metaphor *A FRIEND IS HUMAN BODY* conceptualizes friends as a part of or an extension of the writers' body, or a fusion into an embodied unity, indicating a friend similar and always connected to them. The feeling of inclusion is strong, as in Example (12).

(12)   She is very deep as a person and kind. I think to have a good friend is like having <u>a part of myself outside my body, a part that I can have a connection with all the time.</u>

The supportive function of body parts can also be emphasized in metonymy: a good friend should be _a shoulder when you want to cry_ or _a hand to hold on_. These metaphors thus resemble the SUPPORT type above, but within the domain of the body.

In the systematic metaphor A FRIEND IS AN ELEMENT OF NATURE, writers convert friends to something concrete and highly symbolic with inherent positive value, as revealed in Example (13):

(13)   My friends they are the same <u>flower</u> in my life. When you take <u>a flower</u> and the smell is nice, you become happy. My friends they are also the same.

The writer extends the image, describing feelings of pleasure when picking a flower that perfumes the air. Natural elements were found in metaphors where friends transform life and give it greater meaning, as in as the following examples: _friends are <u>gold</u> in life_ and _a good friend is like <u>clean water</u>_. The analogy between gold and friends gives an idea of the estimated value of friendship, and the comparison with clean water shows that friendship is something essential to life. These metaphors have an inherent poetic value, and some of them consist of elaborated constructions, as in: _she [the friend] is <u>my second half part of the apple</u>_. The image of the apple refers to something tasty and nourishing, whereas the _other second half part_ indicates unity and mutual dependence. In this group, there were several metaphors with this kind of transforming power, rendering friendship as being larger than life. For these linguistic metaphors, the textual contexts are essential for the interpretation. They also differ from the previous groups in the sense that they are less related to the writers' experiences of migration.

6.   Conclusive discussion

In this article, friendship metaphors have been analysed as systematic metaphors and interpreted in light of the writers' narrated experience of migration in a language test context. Below, the findings are discussed in relation to the research questions.

As for positioning, neither the situational test context nor the experience of being language learners were thematized in the texts. The results from the writing task of the SFI test thus differ from the oral part of the test, of which Rydell (2018) found that the test situation itself was commented on, and the position of being a "good student" was frequently claimed by the students. A possible explanation could be the fact that the oral test, as in Rydell's study, is taken in front of assessors, which makes it less likely for the test situation to be disregarded. By contrast, the written texts frequently referred to experiences of migration, which were

analysed as an identity position actualized in the texts (cf. De Fina, 2015). This experience was visible in the textual contexts of the metaphors, relating to countries of origin and thematizing *here/there* and to *old/new* friends. The theme of being a newcomer was reflected in the need for friends in a new life, and perhaps also in the unbalanced relations where the writers often positioned themselves as *receivers* rather than *givers*. Also, an overall consensus was displayed in the texts that friends are important in order to have or to create a 'good life'. However, the fact that the writers did not overtly thematize the test situation, contrary to the test-takers in Rydell's (previously cited) study, does not hinder that the identities displayed in the texts, as well as the constructions of friendship (cf. de Fina, 2015), may be influenced by the test situation and the writers' beliefs about what would be rewarded by the examiners. This is a possible limitation of our study. Although many of the metaphors found seem universal of human experience – for example, those categorized as ELEMENT OF NATURE – we cannot rule out that the test situation possibly had an impact on the metaphors that resulted in the thematic categories. Perhaps the groupings *guidance and help, belonging and inclusion* and *sharing and solidarity* echo the writers' ideas about what examiners would find to be adequate conceptions of language learners and adult second language students.

Further, the friendship metaphors mirrored both dependency on others and individuality, reflecting different degrees of agency, ranging from instrumental components of guidance and help to less concrete and rather existential functions of friends/friendship, as mirrored in the imagery. The agency expressed in the metaphors related to *guidance and help* is rather weak, and the metaphors reflect a certain vulnerability in the writers being related to the need of SUPPORT and SECURITY, for example, by describing a friend as a <u>*support system*</u>. These metaphors also express a need of affirmation and positive affection, as well as gratitude. The category *belonging and inclusion* mirrors, to a greater degree, the newcomer situation. The FAMILY theme is generally strongly emotionally loaded when friends replace an original family and its unconditional love. The metaphors often reflect friendship as an active choice, for example, *friends are <u>family that you choose yourself</u>*, and thus represent stronger agency in "self-making and world-making" (Bruner, 2001, p.25). Also, the theme CHANGE includes metaphors that reflect a strong agency, for instance, *good friends <u>can save life</u>*. In the category *sharing and solidarity*, a comparison with the HUMAN BODY points to consistency and unity. To associate a friend with an ELEMENT OF NATURE like <u>*gold*</u> or <u>*clean water*</u> provides an idea of the value of friendship.

The overall picture is complex, pointing both to potentially contradictory processes of vulnerability and of agency. An emergent discursive identity construction in this data is thus the writers being newcomers with an existential need of keeping old friends in their countries of origin and creating novel friendship

relations in their new country. A noteworthy observation is that the metaphors are almost exclusively used in relation to the friendship theme, and do not occur frequently in other parts of the texts. Therefore, we acknowledge that metaphors in the SFI testing practice are not mainly embellishments. Rather, they are constitutive for meaning-making relative to the particular topic of the texts (cf. Hasan, 2007) and are used strategically to construe feelings and relations (Ahlgren, 2020). We believe that this finding has implications for test construction, as it reinforces the need to include universal themes of human experience in language testing, in order to enable test-takers to express multi-faceted understandings and explore language in more complex ways. Moreover, for the valuation of metaphorical expressions in language test, the findings point to a need of assessment criteria for writers use of novel and inventive metaphors.

As for linguistic creativity, the metaphors in the left side of the proposed model (Table 1) tend to be less innovative, just as these tend to attribute more instrumental functions to friendship. Here we find examples such as, _a good advisor_ or _happy things._ Similarly, more abstract and existential values (contributing to an accomplished life) are attached to friendship on the right in the model, such as _clean water_. The lack of similarity between tenor (a friend) and vehicle (clear water) in these metaphors creates a tension that makes them stronger or more vivid than conventionalized metaphors (Ricœur, 1975). It has been claimed that this type of _living metaphor_ has an intrinsic performative force, which may convey new perspectives of reality to the receiver of the texts (Ricœur, 1975; Ahlgren, 2014). Such creative and, in some cases, poetically loaded metaphors are often surprising and unfamiliar, as compared to "dead" metaphors (e.g. Birdsell, 2018, p. 55). In our data, some of these creative metaphors – like _the second half part of the apple_ (also referred to in the title of this article) – require an explanatory context to be understood. Since deviation in lexicogrammar may create tensions more or less new in the target language, there is a risk that the metaphorical meaning will be lost. The creation of new metaphors – especially in second language contexts – can thus be considered as a "communication at breaking point" (Kristensson Uggla, 1999, p. 465). Whether this kind of communication strategy is to be seen as successful or as risk-taking (MacArthur, 2010; Littlemore & Low, 2006) depends on several aspects, e.g. the overall language proficiency level of the writer and the listener's/reader's tolerance of innovative linguistic creativity (Ahlgren, 2014).

In conclusion, the analysis confirms the initial assumption of the study that the friendship theme enhances metaphor-dense language in texts written in a second language testing context. These results indicate the importance of using abstract, existential and emotional themes in language testing, to enable second language writers to express different facets of their experience and knowledge.

The test takers may thus be allowed to present themselves as social agents who act and react to universal values, such as creating and keeping transnational relations through friends.

This study has shown that metaphor can help writers create nuanced and multifaceted meanings with aesthetic value. The study points to a need to also highlight figurative language as an important component in meaning-making in beginner second language teaching (e.g. Littlemore & Low, 2006). Further research is thus needed in order to explore how linguistic creativity can be related to second language assessment, evaluation and rating.

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Appendix

Table 2. Thematic categories (bold characters) and systematic metaphors (majuscules and in italic)

Guidance and help		**Belonging and inclusion**		**Sharing and solidarity**	
A FRIEND/FRIENDSHIP IS…					
SUPPORT	*SECURITY*	*FAMILY*	*CHANGE*	*HUMAN BODY*	*ELEMENT OF NATURE*
står bredvid oss	gamla skor	en syster	kan ändra ditt liv	en del av själv utanför min kropp	en blomma
mitt stödsystem	mina favoritsaker	en äldre syster	kan rädda livet	en del som jag kan ha ett samband med hela tiden	guld rent vatten
en bra rådgivare	lyckliga saker	en kär syrra	kan byta livet	en axel när man vill gråta	min andra halva delen av äpplet
stod nära mig		mer än en bror	veta livet	en hand att hålla fast	
som står bredvid dig		familjen som man väljer			
		ett syskson			
		en annan familj			

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