Is the English Knowledge of Iranian English Literature Students Metaphorically Colorful?

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Abstract
Color terms are usually used to depict the colors of objects in the real world and represent some metaphorical conceptualizations. English, as a language with a long history, is abundant in color terms which are used metaphorically. This paper aimed to scrutinize the metaphorical competence of 39 BA students of English Literature at University of Isfahan from both genders. To test their knowledge with a direct focus on their knowledge of color metaphors, the researcher-made test, contrived especially to evaluate both their recognition and production of metaphorical knowledge, was used. The collected answer sheets were checked and rated objectively item by item by one rater, and points of every participant were counted. Results showed that surprisingly the metaphors with the term 'color' is the easiest, and in spite of their being infrequent in English and Persian the metaphors with the words 'silver' and 'rose' are the second and third easiest groups of metaphors. In contrast, the terms 'black' and 'white' although being frequent in the two languages, the metaphorical use of them was more difficult for Iranian learners. Additionally, the metaphorical use of the terms 'blue' and 'red' is unbelievably more difficult despite they are highly frequent colors in the immediate environment. Findings also showed that recognition questions were easier than the production ones.

Keywords: Color metaphors, Iranian BA students, Metaphorical competence, Recognition and production.

1.Introduction

What is not colorful? Only abstract entities, but in reality not in our mind. So, it is worthwhile to note that the world is colorful and everything in it either concrete or abstract is colorful as well. Since there are a huge number of concrete and abstract entities in the world, there can be an almost infinite number of colors some of which not yet identified and/or named. Scientifically speaking, any ray of light projected on an object and materialized can be considered as a color. There is a word in any language and community for any identified color in the real world. According to He (2011, p. 1), "Color terms are usually used to depict the colors of objects in the world." As a language with a long history, English is abundant in basic color terms. The existence of the blue sky, the green tree, the golden sun, and so on, indicative of a good substance to view and express something unfamiliar, complicated, and abstract, makes it easy to use colors to express, explain, and

comprehend other categories metaphorically. Among these color terms, there is a special subset known as basic color terms. English has 11 basic color terms including black, white, red, green, yellow, blue, brown, purple, pink, orange, and gray (Jameson & Alvarado, 2003; Philip, 2011; Schirillo, 2001; Uusküla, 2006). Now, let's imagine communication without the words for colors. Is it possible? Sure, not.

But note that the association of the color of an object to it as a modifier or adjective (denotative meaning) is one part of the role played by such words in language. Let's take a step forward and include the metaphorical use of the words for colors (connotative meanings). Is it possible to use a written or spoken form of a language without taking into account the vast and invaluable metaphorical use of color terms? Although the study of metaphor has a long history, the publication of the book entitled 'Metaphors We live By' by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980 is considered to be a turning point in metaphor study. After all, metaphor is not only conceived of being a figure of speech, but also as a way of thinking. Lakoff's (1988) cognitive view on metaphor is regarded as a breakthrough in metaphor study (Haser, 2005).

Language is a means of communication and people use it to accomplish such function as communicating their thoughts and ideas by applying existing semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic resources. To clarify meaning, speakers and hearers or writers and readers should be able to interact. In the process of interaction, language users are expected to have a good mastery of the elements of language based on some predetermined guidelines. In this regard, the role of metaphors in communication should not be overlooked. Metaphor is defined by different scholars in different ways but all the definitions have something in common. Metaphor is the use of one notion to enlighten

another, that is, metaphor is the deployment of one element from a context of experience to clarify similar contexts. Thus, metaphor transfers the meaning from one concept to another on the basis of provided similarities.Lakoff and Johnson (1980a) define metaphor as a process by which people conceive of one thing in terms of another. Metaphors pave the way for understanding something abstract in terms of something more tangible. They are not solely poetic in nature but rather determine usage in human language. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980b), the ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which human beings both think and act, is basically metaphorical in nature, but this conceptual system is not something people are normally aware of. People simply think and act more or less automatically along certain lines in innumerable minor things they usually perform. What these lines are is by no means well defined. One way to find them out is by looking at language. "Since communication is based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking and acting, language is a significant source of evidence for what that system is like" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a, p. 3). Accrediting this point hints that usual way of thinking, experiences, and activities are all matters of metaphor, which can be more or less dealt with in the ordinary life.

To understand the different functions of human conceptual system, on the basis of which communication is done, there is but to look at language as a means of communication. Thus, literal or ordinary language reflects man's everyday concepts which are themselves structured by metaphors. Metaphorical use of language is a universal phenomenon, that is, all languages are metaphorical to a certain extent (Kövecses, 2005, 2010). Basically, in line with linguistic evidence, Lakoff and Johnson (1980a) asserted that most of human ordinary conceptual

system is metaphorical in nature. They argued that metaphor is not just a matter of language, or of mere words rather human thought processes are largely metaphorical, and that metaphors are not only cross-linguistic but also cross-cultural phenomena.

Metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible precisely because there are metaphors in a person's conceptual system (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a). The conceptual system is a model of reality upon which every aspect of human behavior is based. People's social organizations, religious beliefs, figurative arts, and language are rooted in it. Analysis of any of these aspects of human behavior would shed some light on the structure of the conceptual system. However, the analysis of language is particularly informative since language is the primary means of communication.

Based on the conceptual metaphor theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980a), metaphor is regarded not only as a textual decoration which contributes to the expressiveness of the text but also with an important role in structuring thinking and therefore language. McGlone (2007) define metaphor as understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another or as a partial mapping or set of correspondence between two conceptual domains which they term the source and target. However, "such metaphorical structuring is partial in that only certain aspects of a target domain are brought into focus, thus stressing the most relevant aspects while at the same time hiding some other aspects of a concept, in line with the principle of metaphorical highlighting and hiding" (ibid., 1980a, p. 10). Metaphorical expressions not only involve linguistic (and semantic) elements, but they also embody features that focus on human cognition and culture(s).

Metaphor on the other hand is more powerful than other figures of speech because it is more condensed and they are directly related to human cognition. Until recently, metaphor, meaning hidden connotation, had been treated in English as one of the figures of speech originating in rhetoric. The term metaphor is broadly made use of to illustrate any concept, object, or character when it is figuratively compared and/or contrasted to something similar but more concrete. Metaphor includes a large portion of figurative language. By definition, a metaphor involves a relationship of comparison between different propositions which are believed to have some kind of similarity. Therefore, a metaphor is comprised of three parts including: (a) topic, (b) image, and (c) point of similarity. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005, p. 313) define a metaphor as "… a comparison between two dissimilar notions where one notion is to be understood in terms of the other notion."

2. Methodology
2.1. Participants
The participants of this study were 39 BA students of English Literature at University of Isfahan from both genders. The age range was between 19 and 25. Convenient sampling procedure was used in this study in that all the participants were from an intact class of 3rd semester BA students. It should be mentioned that ethical issues related to research such as originality of research, confidentiality, and morality were observed. To this end, the participants were informed of the fact that they were selected to take part in this research, and the obtained data would be used merely for the sake of research. In addition, it was made clear that their demographic information would be kept confidential, and only treated data without referring to their personal information would be

published. Furthermore, they were also given a clear statement of the purpose of the researchers' study or the basic outline of what the researchers would like to explore. And, the participation was voluntary, that is, there was no penalty for refusing to participate.

2.2. Measurement Materials

The test of color metaphors was the researcher-made test of metaphorical competence focusing on the color metaphors, contrived especially to evaluate the participants' metaphorical knowledge, both in recognition and production of written metaphorical language. This test included five Quizzes: The Quiz A pertained to the comprehension of metaphorical language and consisted of 10 multiple-choice items with four choices each. The stem was a statement including a color metaphor with a slot to be filled with one of the one-word choices. The Quiz B was also a kind of multiple choice test consisting of five items each of which had three choices. In this part, there was a clue for each item followed by an incomplete sentence. The participants were required to fill the incomplete sentence according to the clue and three choices provided. The Quiz C was associated with production of metaphorical expressions of color. Totally 10 items were placed in this part. Each item was an incomplete statement without any clue or choices. The participants were asked to fill the gap based on their knowledge on color metaphors. The anticipated (right) answers for this part was one-word color terms. The Quiz D of the test was 10 incomplete statements. These items were a kind of matching questions the slot of each of which was asked to be filled with one more than one-word color metaphor. This part of the test was a kind of recognition type of question. Finally, the Quiz E was a kind of cloze test with 20 slots. The omitted words in the cloze test were all color terms. The test was proved to be valid by an expert in the field. The reliability was calculated by SPSS, and it was 0.751 which is considered to be a kind of appropriate test to be administered to the participants.

2.3. Data Collection Procedures

To test the participants' knowledge for the sake of determining the level of their metaphorical competence with a direct focus on their knowledge of color metaphors, the following steps were taken. After devising a researcher-made test containing a number of items with different formats related to the color metaphors, the participants were prepared with a test along with the corresponding answer sheet. After distributing the tests and giving a complete description about the test and the logic behind administering such a test, the respondents were asked to start answering the test. Every participant could turn in the test and the answer sheet as soon as they finished the test items. Since the time limit for the respondents was set to be 45 minutes, after that predetermined time all the answer sheets and tests were taken back. Since the items were a kind of objective type, the scoring was carried out by an answer key. The collected answer sheets were checked item by item by one rater for each participant.

2.4. Data Analysis Procedures

To analyze the obtained data, points of each participants in the test of metaphorical competence were checked and counted question by question. That is, the correct answer of any participant to any question in test of metaphorical competence was scored one point and the wrong answers or the items without any answer were scored zero. This operation was carried out for each participant's answers to all the items. Then, the whole score of every participant was calculated by adding up the number of correct responses to the items in the
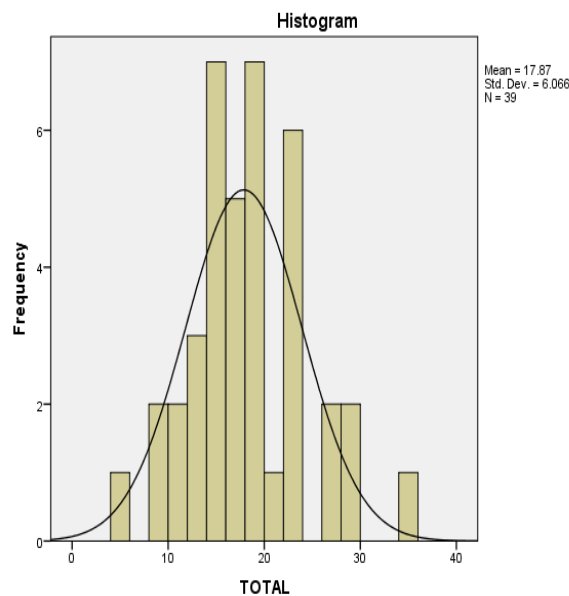
test. That is, a participant who answered all the items correctly would get the whole score. It should be mentioned that the test of metaphorical competence had its own answer key which made it possible to score items objectively. It should be reminded that all the data was quantitative and also it is worthy of consideration that the data was primary in the sense that the data was gathered by the researcher himself. The data obtained from the test of metaphorical competence were subjected to statistical analysis, applying measures of central tendency and dispersion of descriptive statistics including mean, median, mode, standard deviation.

3. Results
3.1. Test analysis

To start analysis of the data and to be certain that the data was distributed normaly, the normal distribution test was undergone and the findings proved the data as a normal distribution.

Figure 1. Normal distribution curve.

Table 1. Test of normality of data distribution

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
TOTAL	.119	39	.181	.982	39	.780

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on the Figure 1 and Table 1 it can be concluded that since the value is more than .05 the data is distributed normally. Also based on the computed mean for the whole test it can be concluded that the test facility index is equal to .32 which in turn means that the items was more difficult. Based on the computed SD for the whole test it is easily inferred that the sample was not very homogeneous. Since the sig. is more than .05, it means that the data distribution is normal.

Table 2. Item Analysis for Quiz A

Item number	Number of correct responses out of 39	Percentage of correct responses
A1	8	20.50
A2	6	15.40
A3	23	59.00
A4	9	23.10
A5	6	15.40
A6	14	35.90
A7	15	38.50
A8	12	30.80
A9	33	84.60
A10	21	53.80

As shown in Table 2, the easiest item is A9 which is the easiest item of the whole test either. And the most difficult items in this quiz are A2 and A5. Although the metaphor in item A9, to be born with a silver spoon, does not exist in Persian, the participants answered it best and this can be attributed to the fact that they have possibly read it somewhere in their academic courses. The difficulty of item A2 and A5 for sure relates to the fact that the two metaphors do not exist in Persian and part of the difficulty of item A5 might be related somehow to sports because in sports those who receive red cards will be evicted from the game and since there was no distractor of 'red' in the stem, most participants answered it hesitatingly wrong. And the notable number of correct answers to item A3 can be related to the fact that in Iran, like some other countries, culinary appliances, especially large goods, are white-colored and the participants see them in their live.

Table 3. Item Analysis for Quiz B

Item number	Number of correct responses out of 39	Percentage of correct responses
B1	12	30.80
B2	27	69.20
B3	30	76.90
B4	30	76.90
B5	32	82.10

Based on the statistics in Table 3, it is obvious that B5 is the easiest item and B1 is the most challenging. The easiness of item B5 is, for sure, related to the fact that this metaphor is literally translated into Persian with the same concept of 'something that you say which means someone should not criticize another person for a fault that they have themselves'. Items B3, B4 as well as item B2 are not that difficult, and the reason of such easiness may be attributed to the fact that B3 does exist in one way or another in Persian and the other two metaphors though not exactly existing in Persian gained a good number of correct responses mightily because of their

existence in the academic syllabus of the participants.

Table 4. Item Analysis for Quiz C

Item number	Number of correct responses out of 39	Percentage of correct responses
C1	4	10.30
C2	5	12.80
C3	0	00
C4	20	51.30
C5	8	20.50
C6	3	7.70
C7	13	33.30
C8	20	51.30
C9	4	10.3
C10	5	12.8

As shown in Table 4, it is apparent that this section includes the most difficult item of the whole test, C3, to which none of the participants could prepare the right answer. On the other side of the extreme, the two items, C4 and C8, were proved to be the easiest questions in this section. On the one hand, the unpredictable difficulty of item C3 is partly related to its non-existence in Persian and partly, as far as the researcher knows, due to the fact that this sentence connotes a positive meaning of owning something in spite of the fact that the word 'black' in Persian mostly connotes negative meaning. This contradiction may have caused the respondents all to answer it wrongly. On the other hand, the notable easiness of item C4 is that the culinary appliances specifically the large ones like refrigerator, washing machine, and the like are white-colored in Iran. And in case of item C8, it can be said that since most Iranian people are Muslim and since Muslim people believe in spiritual and supernatural phenomena and entities, especially in case of need and emergency, this metaphor is not far from their beliefs and thinking.

Table 5. Item Analysis for Quiz D

Item number	Number of correct responses out of 39	Percentage of correct responses
D1	14	35.9
D2	26	66.7
D3	4	10.3
D4	25	64.1
D5	14	35.9
D6	8	20.5
D7	9	23.1
D8	4	10.3
D9	17	43.6
D10	19	48.7

Table 5 clearly shows that, out of 10 items in this section, items D3 and D8 are the most demanding questions posed, and on the contrary item D2 is the easiest for the participants. The reason for the difficulty of items D3 and D8 for sure is their nonexistence in Persian literature and language, neither literally nor conceptually.

The possible reason for respondent best performance in case of item D2 and their close good performance in D4 is that this metaphor' black sheep of the family' not literally translated into Persian but conceptually exists in the respondents' native language.

Table 6. Item Analysis for Quiz E

Item number	Number of correct responses out of 39	Percentage of correct responses
E1	24	61.5
E2	4	10.3
E3	24	61.5
E4	8	20.5
E5	5	12.8
E6	4	10.3
E7	11	28.2
E8	18	43.6
E9	10	25.6
E10	11	28.2
E11	5	12.8
E12	6	15.4
E13	11	28.2
E14	12	30.8
E15	11	28.2
E16	2	5.1
E17	12	30.8
E18	5	12.8
E19	11	28.2
E20	4	10.3

As presented in Table 6, it is inferred that items E1 and E3 are the easiest with two third of correct answers out of all participants, and E16 is the most difficult, the second most difficult item of the whole test. E2, E6, and E20 are the second most difficult items with almost one tenth of correct answers out of all responses. The difficulty of item E16 would be related to the fact that in Persian there is not such a metaphor and Iranian people use a combination 'yogurt' and 'rub' to mean 'Wight-wash' any mistake.

With regard to item E2, Persian speakers use word combination of 'milk' and 'mouth' and relating it to early childhood of drinking milk of Mom to connote inexperienced people. Considering item E6, it can be argued that since in Iran mostly students use black pencil and pencils with colors other that black are called 'medad rangi' not pencil, and this lack of cultural or linguistic background may have attributed to such a large number of incorrect responses. Instead in Iran if something is wrong

more than often it is crossed out with a red ink not pencil.

With regard to item E1, it can be argued that raising hands means accepting defeat and not going to keep on doing the argument or fighting though not necessarily holding a white flag. In Persian culture it is believed that if the enemy or the opponent raised their hands, they have decided to end the struggle to overcome you. Historically speaking, the either side of the war was to raise a white flag to announce that they decided to quit the war. As time passed, this historical action gained extension in meaning and used more often in other contexts. Putting item E3 under the microscope, it can be claimed that, in addition to the positive connotation of color 'red' in Iranian culture and its being used in important ceremonies and parties, red carpet is always rolled out to warmly welcome the politicians arriving in the capital Tehran, and all participants who are watching TV or following the political issues in Iran would undoubtedly see such a scene and mightily guessed the correct answer in case they even did not know what the write answer is with certainty.

Based on the statistics in Table 2 to Table 6, it can be found out that C3 is the most difficult item to which nobody could prepare a correct answer while on the other side of the extreme A9 is the easiest item with 33 correct answers out of 39 participants (almost 5% missed the item).

Table 7. The Total Frequency and Mean of All Quizzes

Quiz	Total number of correct answers	Mean number of correct responses	SD	Mean percentage
Quiz A	147	14.7	1.64	45.84
Quiz B	141	26.2	1.20	67.17
Quiz C	82	8.2	1.71	21.02
Quiz D	136	13.6	2.34	34.87
Quiz E	198	9.9	3.77	25.36

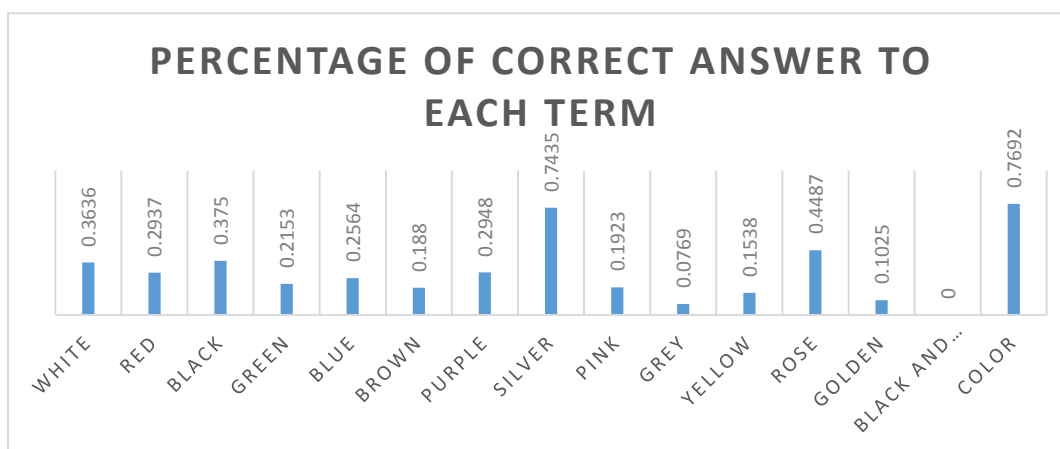**PERCENTAGE OF CORRECT ANSWERS TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF QUIZZES**
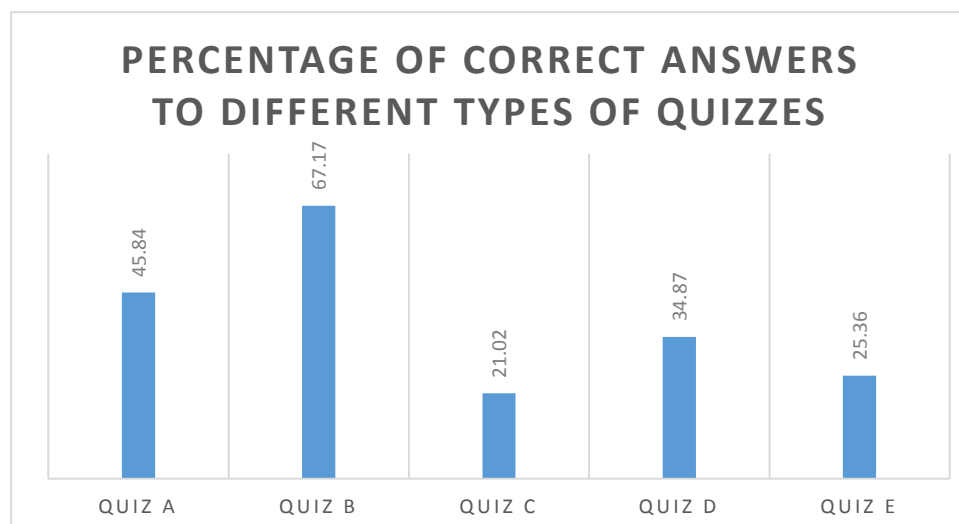
Figure 2. Percentage of correct answers to different types of quizzes.

Based on Table 7, it can be concluded that the Quiz C is the most difficult as expected because in this quiz there is no clue and it is a kind of production test (open ended question). Quiz E stands the second most difficult task because it is a kind of cloze test in which there was the least possible clues for the answer but the coherence and cohesiveness of the text could possibly help the participants to answer it better than expected.

Quiz B is the easiest section of the test though not expected to be. The second easiest section of the test is Quiz A which is a kind of multiple-choice item type. And Quiz D, a kind of matching item type, stands in the middle taking into account the difficulty level of the sections of the test. It also is easily understood that the answers to the Quiz B is the most homogenous and Quiz E is the least homogeneous.

Table 8. The Total Frequency Based on Color Terms

Color term	A	B	C	D	E	Total	Total number of correct answers	Percentage of correct answer
White	A3, A4, A10	-	C4, C8,C10	D8	E1, E8, E15, E16	11	156	.3636
Red	A6, A7, A8	B1	C5	D9	E3,E6,E9,E11,E18	11	126	.2937
Black	A2	B5	C7	D2	E5, E10, E14, E17	8	117	.3750
Green	-	-	C2	D5	E2, E4, E13	5	42	.2153
Blue	A1	-	-	-	E7, E19	3	30	.2564
Brown	-	-	-	D1, D3,	E20	3	22	.1880
Purple	-	-	C9	D10	-	2	23	.2948
Silver	A9	-	-	D4	-	2	58	.7435
Pink	A5	-	-	D7	-	2	15	.1923
Grey	-	-	C6	-	-	1	3	.0769
Yellow	-	-	-	-	E12	1	6	.1538
Rose	-	B2	-	D6	-	2	35	.4487
Golden	-	-	C1	-	-	1	4	.1025
Black and white	-	-	C3	-	-	1	0	0
Color	-	B3, B4	-	-	-	2	60	.7692
Total	10	5	10	10	20	55	697	Average .3249

Figure 3. Percentage of correct answer to each item.

As shown in Table 8, the word 'color' itself as the correct answer of the two questions stands first with more than three fourths of the respondents answering correctly. The color term 'silver' stood the second place with regard to the percentage of correct answers with a bit less than three fourths of respondents answering the related items correctly. The reason might be its decorative use, its being precious, or the respondents' explicit knowledge of the metaphors containing this color term. On the other side of the extreme, the phrase 'black and white' as the correct answer received not even one person responding correctly (the most difficult item of the whole test). Grey is the second most difficult or maybe of unfamiliar metaphorical use for the respondents as is the case with Persian language (since there is not any metaphor with the word 'grey' in Persian language). The percentages related to the three main color terms are almost the same with a nuance difference. It can be concluded that the main color terms are more or less of the same value in the literature and culture of the native language of the respondents compared with the English language. And this notable number of correct responses can partly be attributed to the respondents being well aware of the importance of these three color terms in conceptualizing the

world around themselves, their mastery on the metaphors of the two languages specifically the metaphors of English language, or any other unknown reason! It should be reminded that part of the difference between percentages of the correct responses might be attributed to the difference in the type of questions. Who knows if we replace, say item C6, and the color grey with white or any other color term may the results change. Interested researchers could unravel the fact that whether the type of question (multiple-choice, cloze test, matching questions, etc.) can change the behavior of the participants to the same question with more or less the similar (stem or) context.

3.2. Participant analysis
The average score of the participants was calculated to be 17.87, the SD was 6.06, and the distribution was normal. The participant soring 5 is the weakest, and the one scoring 34 is the most highly scoring participant. Median is 17, range is 29, and the distribution is unimodal with 19 as the most frequent score for the participants.

4. Discussion and Conclusion
Metaphor or metaphorical thinking can expand the meanings of words and/or expressions and

create networks of words-to-words or expressions-to-expressions. Metaphor is a device to decode something by using something else. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980a, p. 5) put it, "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another." Metaphor or metaphorical thinking expands our understanding by connecting one thing to another whether it is a word or thought. Metaphors may not be overtly expressed in an utterance, but they are covertly expressed in an uttered implication. This may be one of the reasons for metaphor having been translated into hidden meaning or connotation.It is necessary for teachers and learners to be familiar with conceptual systems of the TL, and people who speak that language. It means that familiarization with the conceptual system of the TL is made possible with the acquisition of conceptual metaphors of that language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a). They also claimed that conceptual metaphors are grounded in correlation within our experience. Kövecses (2003, p. 311) pointed out that "the theory of conceptual metaphors is emerging as a new tool that is capable of providing serious assistance to both teachers and students in teaching and learning foreign languages." Conceptually, metaphor has its roots in human cognition, and schema is a data structure which represents general concepts and meanings stored in people's mind. Everyone has their own knowledge schemata considering the way they look at the world around them based on Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. This conceptual view and the role of schemas in comprehension are evidenced by prominent scholars who have suggested that schemas play a significant role in metaphor comprehension.

Although this study would shed some light on both comprehension and production of some specific color metaphors in an EFL context, it is inevitably deficient in a few aspects and several problems encountered while conducting this research. This study was based on the collected data from the sample of nonnative learners of English in Iran with a focus on the metaphors of color terms with a written test. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized unless data were collected from oral performances of nonnative learners in EFL situations and contrasted with native speakers and even with ESL situations to provide better picture of the ways of applying color metaphors in natural language use.

Another limitation is the limited number of participants under the focus in this investigation. More studies with a large number of participants from different genders with different background knowledge and different age or even with different majors could yield more reliable results. The results may change if studies are conducted on large numbers of participants with different features possibly affecting their knowledge. In a country like Iran, much longer period of time would be necessary to survey different classes of learners. Moreover, all the findings are based on specific kinds of words and vocabulary items, say, color metaphors. Thus, they may not be relevant to other (kinds of) words. This is a point that both teachers and materials writers need to think twice about.

The data were collected only with one test with ex post facto design. This constraint on administering test was determinant for the way in which data was collected. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized for all EFL students or learners in Iran and/or other countries. Also, because of the same constraint, it was impossible to conduct more repeated test of different type, while repeated and different test types would certainly have a more detailed picture of actual situation.

Like any other research study in this contemporary world, this empirical study was not able, mostly due to practical considerations, to take a comprehensive scope of the important aspects of the phenomenon under investigation. Certainly, there are methodologically fruitful and important insights for future researchers, hidden in this research study. It is hoped that L2 researchers keep these suggestions in their minds and apply them to their forthcoming research studies. It seems necessary to do more in-depth, controlled, and exhaustive research to keep a firm hand on teaching and learning metaphors in general and color metaphors in particular. The limitations on the way of doing this empirically based research boxed the researcher in. Here some suggestions for further research were introduced.

First, it is worthy of consideration that this study mainly focused on BA students of English Literature. Since, there is a large population of students from primary school to postgraduate studies who learn English for either academic purposes in different fields or nonacademic purposes, there could be numerous studies to shed more light on their metaphorical competence. Also, the number of the participants in this study was restricted due to some limitations. More research with large number of participants would unravel some more generalizable facts.

Second, the examination of color metaphors was based on written tests. Furthermore, because many research projects have focused on the written aspects of language, it is vital to carry out research with the aim of explicating the nature of spoken language. Studies of this kind will undoubtedly enable researchers to find out the different forms and functions of spoken language. Moreover, there could be extra studies to put the metaphorical competence of EFL learners' both written and spoken discourse

under the microscope to discover if there is any difference or correlation between the two types of discourse, that is, oral and written discourse. Additionally, the investigation of the EFL learners' written competence was limited to only a certain number of color metaphors with some specific kinds of items (e.g., multiple-choice, cloze, matching items, etc.). More research might scrutinize the competence of the learners using different kinds of testing instruments.

Third, in the light of color metaphors tested and analyzed throughout this study, it can be said that this study has only been a preliminary attempt to discover the participants' metaphorical competence in producing and comprehending them in written mode. This study dealt with only the most common color metaphors, collected from different books. There might be other studies, dealing with the other less frequent color metaphors as well as other abstract and concrete concepts related to color metaphors. Meanwhile, it is as clear as day that more research of this type covering a larger number of color metaphors is needed to investigate their significance in EFL learning and teaching.

Last but not least is the fact that the length of the testing process and the scope of the study were limited due to certain circumstances under which the research was done, and possibly other research with lengthy period would provide more reliable and generalizable data on the issue under investigation.

EFL learners and teachers in Iran tend to use the bottom-up approach for learning individual words and grammatical points. The colorful, playful, and effective use of figurative speech, such as metaphor, is only taught in the college literature classes. It is recommended that such rhetorical devices be given a greater focus in all levels of English instruction in order to enable

students to better comprehend real-world English. The findings of this study might be beneficial to English instructors in finding out the strengths and weaknesses of students in applying metaphorical competence to communicate their meanings, discovering the suitable way of teaching and testing students' metaphorical competence in English, and finally in preparing textbooks enriched with numerous metaphorical expressions to make a good source available for English students. Also, it might help the students, who are to graduate as EFL students, in enhancing their metaphorical awareness and knowledge.

Obviously, active and passive lexicon play a vital role in communicating thought through any given language, and the role of metaphorical expressions as a major category in lexis cannot be ignored. Wanted or unwanted, those who are capable of both understanding and producing metaphorical expressions would express their ideas better. One of the main reasons why Iranian EFL learners do not show signs of being metaphorically competent in English could be attributed to the fact that they have never been formally and systematically exposed to the English metaphorical expressions in their English courses.

Firstly, aspects of metaphorical language use in general, and metaphorical language in EFL context in particular, could be and should be employed in language learning and teaching programs. It is believed that grammatical competence will remain in a perpetual state of potentiality unless it is realized in communication. Firstly, it is the responsibility of ESL and EFL teachers to endeavor to make their students aware of and sensitive to the metaphorical competence that plays an important role in communication of ideas in oral and written discourse. These will serve as useful means for communication which will enable the learners to communicate their thoughts in actual contexts long after they have left the language classroom. These will undoubtedly help the foreign or second language learners in communication and a good number of other ways.

Secondly, having mastered the metaphorical competence, a language user will find it exceptionally easy to find the most appropriate equivalents in the target language. A good command of metaphorical competence will help translators, especially those involved in the translation of texts with heavy cultural and social orientations. Also, it will be useful for those who dub films. Interpreters will find the results of this study of great interest. Additionally, they will provide these people with insights as to the cultural aspects of language they must be able to take care of in their career. Moreover, playwrights would benefit from studies of this kind. Most of them start writing a drama without the vital knowledge of the communicative aspects of language. The end result will then be failure for the writer and disgust for the audience.

Thirdly, the results are also useful in teaching foreign languages. They will enable foreign language teachers to decide on the language forms their students are supposed to learn. In the past, many teachers clang to Chomsky's ideal speaker-hearer hypothesis which, in turn, led to the choosing of sentence as the basic unit of language teaching. To them, knowledge of how language functions in communication would no longer follow from knowledge of sentence. Now, it is plain that studies concerning the communicative aspects of language, one of which is the investigation of metaphorical expressions, had to be carried out to provide the theoretical bases upon which language teaching could be safely founded.

Fourthly, the findings are also applicable to materials developers and syllabus designers. Language teaching materials have in the past been largely derived from the products of theoretical sentence grammars. It is believed that materials which derive from a description of discourse and materials which will affect the transfer from grammatical competence, knowledge of sentences, to what has been called communicative competence, knowledge of how sentences are used in the performance of communicative acts of different kinds are now needed. It might be hoped that, for applied linguists, theoretical studies of discourse might indicate the nature of such rules, and give some clues as to how their teaching might be approached.

Last but not least is the fact that the focus of such courses seems to be only on developing reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and grammar, with almost little or no regard for metaphorical language, which could have easily been incorporated into the reading passages in the first place. In other words, not only are students kept in the dark about metaphors in their high school textbooks, but the materials developers and syllabus designers also seem to shy away from any kind of utilization of metaphors.

In educational arenas, research on metaphor is not yet abundant. This pointed researcher in the direction of doing research on metaphor in education. The results of this study are suggestive to develop students' communicative abilities with a great focus on their competence on the production and comprehension of metaphorical expressions of colors. The findings of this study are inevitably limited thanks to innumerable foreseen and unforeseen hurdles through the research process. So, the conclusions cannot be assumed certain and indisputable solution to the problems upon which this research was founded.

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Appendix A: Test

<div align="center">

In the name of God
Test of color metaphors
Time: 45 minutes

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Quiz A: Choose the correct answer. Put a check mark in the appropriate box in the answer sheet.

1. He got really angry and started screaming _____ murder.
a)   black
b)   red
c)   blue
d)   green

2. When your bank account is in credit, you are in the _____.
a)   red
b)   black
c)   white
d)   pink

3.   Large electrical goods for the house, such as cookers and washing machines and the like are called _____ goods.
a)   red
b)   black
c)   white
d)   pink

4. Somebody who is expected to achieve a lot is a great _____ hope.
a)   blue
b)   white
c)   green
d)   brown

5. Six thousand New York City municipal employees are getting "___ slips" this week. In other words, they are being laid off. [American English]
a)   orange
b)   yellow

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c) purple
d) pink
6. Our company has lost a lot of money recently and now we're in the ____.
a) black
b) colors
c) red
d) white
7. The opposition brought up another ____ herring during the debate yesterday.
a) red
b) greed
c) blue
d) white
8. If I caught the ____ eye, I took a late flight.
a) red
b) greed
c) blue
d) white

9. A man who is born with a ____ spoon in his mouth has always been rich.
a) pink
b) blue
c) silver
d) white
10. A ____ knight is a person or organization that saves a company from financial difficulties or an unwanted change of ownership by putting money into the company or by buying it.
a) pink
b) blue
c) silver
d) white

Quiz B: Based on the stem, choose the correct answer that best fits the sentence. Put a check mark in the appropriate box in the answer sheet.

1. red light district
They went to the red light district in order to ____.
a. buy lighting supplies
b. meet prostitutes
c. have the tail-lights on their car repaired

2. see through rose-colored glasses
If someone sees through rose-colored glasses, they don't see ____.
a. the unpleasant side of things
b. the funny side of things

c. the bright side of life

3. show your true colors
We always thought Barry was a weak and coward guy, but he showed his true colors when he ____.
 a. bought a big black motorbike
 b. started drinking whisky and rye
 c. saved a kid from a bear attack

4. with flying colors
Tony took his driving test again today, and passed with flying colors so ____.
 a. he'll have to take it again
 b. he still can't get his license
 c. he can get his license at last

5. the pot calling the kettle black
While she tells lies very frequently, how she dares to ____? I think it is an instance of the pot calling the kettle black!
a.   call me a liar
b.   call me by my first name
c.   call me as an honest guy

Quiz C: Read each sentence carefully and fill in the blanks with an appropriate word. Write the answer in a box provided in the answer sheet.

1. The ……….. rule for working in any factory is to observe its safety regulations.
2. Local residents protested when they heard a factory was going to be built in a ……….. belt area.
3. I won't believe we've got the contract until I see it is in …………..
4. Among the ……….. goods, washing machines are our best sellers.
5. We need to cut through all the ……….. tape and speed up the decision-making process.
6. That's a bit of a ……….. area. It's difficult to say who exactly has responsibility for recruitment.
7. We lose millions in tax revenue every year because of the ……….. economy.
8. They're looking for a ……….. knight to help them fight the takeover bid.
9. Despite occasional patches of ……….. prose, the book is mostly clear and incisive because the writer has tried too hard to make the style interesting
10. A ………..-tie diplomatic reception is an example of the occasion at which men wear formal clothes.

Quiz D: Choose the correct color idiom from the list to fill the space in each sentence. You may need to make some changes to the idioms to put them in the sentences correctly. Write the correct answer in the box provided in the answer sheet.

silver-tongued	brown-bag	black sheep of the family	Purple Heart Medal	blue-eyed boy browned off

pink-collar	white elephant	rose colored spectacles	paint the town red	have green fingers

1.   There are as many **………..** lunches taken to work to be eaten today as in restaurants.

2.   Howard is always considered **………..** but he has never actually done much wrong. I think his sister is worse!

3.   I, on the other hand, have always been considered **………..** and my mother thinks I can't do wrong!

4.   The new manager is **………..** because he speaks in a way that charms or persuades people to do what he wishes.

5.   When we arrived at this house, it was a jungle in the garden but Peter has always **………..** and had it looking like the gardens of a palace within six months.

6.   The reason she fails to plan for the worst case scenario is that she has always been too optimistic and never sees the possibility of the negative happening through those **………..** she wears.

7.   Until recently secretarial work and nursing were very much **………..** professions.

8.   That new parking area is just a **………..** It's too far from the building, so it's completely useless.

9.   I hadn't seen my best friend in ages, so we decided to go out and **……….. .**

10.   A Congressionally-chartered charity composed of military men and women who received the **………..** for wounds suffered in combat.

Quiz E: In this story, you will find idioms with colors terms. Now read the short story and try to work out what the expressions in italics mean. Use the following color terms as many times as necessary. "white, blue, green, red, black, yellow, pink , brown"

A Silver Lining

In a rash moment, I said I'd buy my wife a car for her birthday. The trouble was that she had set her heart on a particular color — white. It had to be white at all costs. I pointed out till I was …………. in the face — almost going out of my mind, that white was a very difficult color to keep clean. But she was adamant and so in the end I decided to show the ………………. flag, as it were. We looked at dozens of white and off white cars but none seemed to be worth buying. Now, I'm a bit ……………, about buying cars because this the first car I am about to buy. I'm the perfect customer as far as the secondhand car salesman is concerned. Take the first place we went to. The manager rolled out the ……………. carpet, when he saw me coming. He started by showing me the most expensive models he could find, some of which made me turn ………….. with envy — I was quite envious of anyone who could afford to buy one. But as soon as I mentioned the sort of age for the car I had in mind, he started to give me …………. looks. I can't describe the language he used when I gave some idea of the price I was thinking of because it would be …………-penciled.

From the beginning I was therefore somewhat browned off. Once in a ……….. moon, I thought do you come across a genuine bargain. I mean some of the dealers are thoroughly dishonest or is it that they are simply telling ……………. lies? The trouble is you have to buy a car in order to find out. At one garage, I actually caught one of the salesmen ………..-handed, just as he was gluing back a chip of paint that had fallen off. I put a ………….. mark against his name. But what really made me see ………….. was

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when I was told that I would only get an old wreck for what I was prepared to pay. Perhaps I was being a bit moderate but then I didn't want to end up in the red. The only way to deal with these salesmen is to put on a bold face. It doesn't matter if you have a …………. streak. You don't have to accept the first price and whatever you do don't give the ………… light to continue with the sale until you're absolutely satisfied. One weekend I decided to leave my car at home and go by train to a large car center. I was feeling in the blue as we approached the man standing by the sales office. He had one of those arrogant expressions that act rather like a red rag to me.

I told him straight that I knew his center had been ……….. -listed by motoring organizations and therefore it was no good him trying to ………-wash. That wiped the arrogant expression off his face. The only trouble was that I discovered that I'd not been talking to the sales manager but a fellow customer. In my confusion I tripped over a spare tire, rolled over and ended up in a ditch. When I got home I was …………. and blue all over. By the sixth weekend of looking I was understandably feeling rather blue I'd even considered getting a car through the ………… market. But every cloud has a silver lining. And that Sunday was a ………. -letter day, since we finally found a car. We were out driving in the countryside when out of the ……., we saw a notice advertising cars for sale in a farm yard. We saw a man in a ……….. study sitting in a small hut. He was the farmer cum salesman from whom I eventually bought the car. He quickly dispensed with all the red tape and very soon I had it in black and ……….. that the car belonged to me. It's quite a good car and it's white or to be more accurate, it's more what you would call two tone. You see with the white there's quite a bit of brown — known less colorfully as rust.