

# The Pragmatics of Rhetorical Discourse - A Model for Teaching Explicit Metaphor in Secondary Education

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## Abstract:

The pragmatic rhetorical text is one of the most important texts in secondary education. It highlights the persuasive techniques and aesthetic expressions used in the construction of pragmatic rhetorical texts, which are based on a set of specific techniques of Arabic rhetoric and the mechanisms involved in interpreting and understanding texts. This includes figurative language, especially explicit metaphor, and its teaching in secondary education. This research focuses specifically on the pragmatic mechanisms through which explicit metaphor is understood, which can be clearly identified in the third year secondary school curriculum.

**Keywords:** pragmatics, rhetoric, education, metaphor, secondary education.

## Introduction:

A number of approaches previously adopted by educational systems have been abandoned in favour of a competence-based approach. This approach is based primarily on starting from the text in order to explore its depths and uncover its meanings, considering the text as a coherent whole built on a series of interrelated levels. The role of the learner in this context is to integrate knowledge and levels and to reproduce them in writing or orally in order to achieve communication.

Communication between individuals often takes place within an aesthetic framework that aims to convince by argument and delight by method. Each style has its own patterns, techniques, appropriate texts and analytical approaches. Given that the secondary level is one of the most important educational stages requiring texts with a rhetorical and pragmatic style, it contributes to the development of the learner's ability to create through figurative expressions in

general and, in particular, through explicit metaphor. This takes into account the cognitive and aesthetic level of the students at this stage. It is therefore essential to approach this type of text through research and analysis.

What is a rhetorically pragmatic text? What is metaphor? How is explicit metaphor understood and appreciated? To what extent are learners able to use explicit metaphor in texts? How is the pedagogical process of teaching explicit metaphor carried out in secondary education? The title of the article is: “Pragmatics of rhetorical teaching - Teaching explicit metaphor in secondary education as a model”. In this article we will discuss several elements, which are as follows:

### **First: Presentation of research terms**

This research paper is based on a number of terms that should first be briefly presented in order to unravel the complexities of the research. The most important of these terms are: metaphor, context, presupposition and Grice’s general principles.

#### **1. Metaphor:**

Metaphor, as a figure of speech, derives its meaning from its linguistic connotation. “... This kind of figurative language is called metaphor... because one of us borrows a garment from another to wear. Such borrowing only occurs between two individuals who have a relationship; this relationship requires one to borrow from the other. If there is no acquaintance between them, one will not borrow from the other because of their separation. This principle also applies to metaphorical language: one does not borrow one term for another without a meaningful acquaintance, just as one person does not borrow from another without mutual knowledge”<sup>1</sup>.

Thus, metaphor is based on its linguistic meaning, which is the idea of borrowing or taking from another with a corresponding similarity between the two parties<sup>1</sup>. It is technically defined as “making something into something else when it is not, and making one thing for another when it is not, in such a way that the aspect of comparison is not apparent in either form or substance”<sup>2</sup>. The essence of this definition is to create a correspondence between the two sides of the comparison without revealing the aspect of similarity either in appearance or in hidden meaning, as if you were making the two sides one when they are not.

#### **2. Context and setting:**

Context is defined as “a general framework within which the elements of the text and its linguistic unity are organised, and a measure by which sentences are connected and related to each other. It is a linguistic and pragmatic environment that oversees the collection of cognitive elements that the text presents to the reader. The context regulates the referential movements between the elements of the text, so that the meaning of a word or a sentence can only be understood by linking it to what precedes or follows it within the framework of the context”<sup>3</sup>.

In this case, the context refers to the linguistic context, which is the connecting thread between parts of the discourse at the levels of sound, structure and syntax that work together to explain each other and converge to indicate the meaning and overall intent of the discourse. On the other hand, the setting is “a collection of facts composed of individuals, characteristics, relationships, and temporal-spatial locations within a specific context”<sup>4</sup>. This means that the setting includes everything that surrounds the discourse, including the speaker, the listener, and the circumstances that frame the communication - such as the conditions under which the words are delivered, the shared knowledge between the parties, and the ideologies, customs, and traditions that influence the linguistic structure beyond the language itself.

### **1- Assumptions**

Professor Masoud Sahrawi says: “In any linguistic communication, the participants start from data and assumptions that are recognised and agreed between them. These assumptions form the necessary communicative background for the success of the communication process and are contained in the contexts and general structural framework. For example, in utterance (1):

(1) Close the window.

And in utterance (2):

(2) Don't close the window.

In both utterances there is a presupposition with the content ‘the window is open’<sup>5</sup>.

Thus, the concept of presupposition can be summarised as the prior knowledge that can be inferred from the utterance and which is a matter of obvious agreement between the two parties”.

### **3. The general principles of Grice**

This is called “conversational implicature”, which is one of the most important topics in pragmatics. It was developed by Paul Grice. The essence of this theory is that speakers say what they mean, or mean more than what they say, or mean the opposite of what they say. Conversational implicature clarifies the difference between what is said and what is meant, specifically the distinction between sentence meaning and speaker meaning. Sentence meaning refers to the literal meaning independent of context, while speaker meaning represents the intended meaning in communication, i.e. the purposes for which speech is delivered in a particular context.

In this context, Grice raises several questions: How can a speaker say one thing and mean another? How can a listener hear one thing and understand another? Here Grice introduces the cooperative principle, which states: “Make your conversational contribution as is required at the stage at which it occurs by the accepted purpose or direction of the conversation exchange in which you are engaged”<sup>6</sup>. What is said is what the words and phrases convey, while what is meant is what the speaker intends to convey indirectly to the listener. The listener uses norms of usage and means of inference to arrive at the speaker’s intended meaning. Conversational implicature is based on four principles known as maxims:<sup>7</sup>

### **1. The maxims of conversational implicature:**

1. Maxim of quantity: This refers to the amount of information you should provide in a conversation and is divided into two parts:

- A. Make your contribution as informative as necessary.
- B. Make your contribution no more informative than necessary.

2. Maxim of quality: This states: Do not say what you believe to be false, and do not say anything for which you cannot provide evidence.

3. Maxim of Relevance: Your contribution should be relevant; this is also known as the Principle of Relation, meaning that your speech should be related to the topic at hand.

4. Principle of Manner: This has three elements:

- Avoid ambiguity.
- Be concise.
- Be orderly.

Conversational implicature occurs when one of these four maxims is violated

### **Second: Presenting the stages of the lesson (explicit metaphor)**

In accordance with the competence-based approach adopted by the educational system, the linguistic and rhetorical elements are based on a previous literary text, which is expected to contain sentences that represent the phenomenon to be taught. This ensures a comprehensive textual approach that integrates rhetorical, syntactic or phonetic phenomena with the overall purpose of the text or discourse being studied.

If it is difficult to find examples of the lesson to be taught in the previous text, the teacher tries to select models that will facilitate the learners' understanding. The lesson begins with an initial or introductory situation, often based on prior knowledge acquired by the learner in a previous lesson or stage.

Next, the teacher moves to the stage of knowledge construction, which is based on the method of pedagogical questioning. This questioning aims to stimulate curiosity and a passion for research in students, motivating them to compete with their peers for the correct answer, especially if it is followed by positive reinforcement from the teacher. This reinforcement puts the student in a position of pride and self-esteem for outperforming his or her peers.

In a third stage, the teacher assesses the learners' performance in this lesson through both cognitive and productive training, by carrying out an evaluation of their understanding of what has been presented.

Below is a practical outline of the stages of this lesson, allowing us to uncover the underlying conversational maxims within it.

#### Starting Situation (Introduction)

Consider the following sentences:

- The moon was bright tonight.

- My mother wakes me every morning.

1- Do you think that the meaning of these sentences is clear and easy to understand, or do they need to be explained and simplified?

- Students' expected answers: Yes, both sentences are clear and simple.

2- If the language is either literal or figurative (metaphorical), how would you classify these sentences?

- Expected student answer: Both sentences are literal, not figurative.

### **Building Knowledge:**

-Now consider our statement:

- “The moon comes to wake me up every morning: Arise, my son...”

1- Is this statement literal or figurative?

- Expected pupil answer: This statement is figurative or metaphorical, not literal.

2- There is a word in the previous sentence that, if replaced by another word, would make the statement literal. What is this word?

- Students’ expected answers: Attempts may vary here and with each incorrect attempt the teacher will guide the students until they reach the conclusion: The word “moon” is used metaphorically, and replacing it with “mother” makes the sentence literal: “My mother comes to wake me up every morning: Get up, my son...”

**3- First conclusion:** So the term “moon” represents metaphor or imagination, while “mother” represents literal meaning.

4- Do you not notice, wise and perceptive one, that the term “moon” has left its context or field of use (as defined in the dictionary), which is the realm of the planets, the sun and the stars? It has moved into another realm - figuratively speaking - the world of people, mothers, children, sleep and waking. This departure and imaginative use is called: linguistic metaphor.

5- Why was the term “moon” used instead of “mother”? What is the purpose of this choice? What is the relationship between the two words?

- Students’ expected answers The aim is to compare the mother with the moon; the relationship is one of similarity or resemblance.

6- What is the point of similarity between the mother and the moon (the common feature)?

- They resemble each other in beauty, brightness and elevation... (The teacher may gesture with hands and fingers to illustrate the elevation, beauty and brightness of the moon to help guide the answer).

7- So who are the parties involved in the comparison here? Who is the subject of the comparison and who is the object of the comparison?

- Expected student answer: The subject (the one being compared) is the mother and the object of comparison (the one being compared to) is the moon.

8- Have both the subject and the object of comparison been mentioned explicitly?

- Expected student answer: The object of comparison, the moon, was mentioned, but the subject, the mother, was not.

9- Which term tells us that the real intended meaning is the mother?

- Expected Student Answer: The phrase “came to wake me up...: Wake up, my son...” indicates that the intended meaning is indeed the mother.

10- Well done! In fact, the mother is associated with “came” and “wakes up” and “says: Arise, my son”. This is called the verbal context, and it is called a context because it accompanies and is associated with the utterance. It is called verbal because it is evident in the words mentioned. One researcher has defined it as follows:

> Context is ... that which makes the speaker indicate that he or she intended a meaning other than the original one. It can be both verbal and non-verbal. The verbal context is a word that fits the object being compared and is mentioned in the speech to divert it from its original meaning. For example, ‘He spoke to me like the sea’ - here ‘sea’ is a metaphor for a generous man and its verbal context is the word ‘spoke’; because the sea itself does not speak”<sup>8</sup>.

Reading this definition, the teacher links it to the example given as follows:

> ... The verbal context is a word that fits the subject being compared, which is mentioned in the speech [as you mentioned: ‘came... wakes me...: Get up, my son...’]”.

There can also be a non-verbal context, called a situational context, which does not appear in words or sentences, but is understood from the situations of the subject and object of comparison and the impossibility of attributing certain qualities to them. It is ‘something outside the word that diverts the speech from its literal meaning, such as contextual clues or the impossibility of meaning’.

An example of a situational context is ... the poet’s saying:<sup>9</sup>

> “The truth was gathered for us in an Imam... who killed miserliness and revived generosity”.

Here the term “killed” is used metaphorically to mean “erased” or “removed”. The context suggests that it is impossible for stinginess to be actually killed<sup>10</sup>.

Now, in the sentence:

11- “The moon came to wake me every morning: Arise, my son...”

We have a comparison in which the term “moon” (the object of the comparison) is explicitly stated, while the subject of the comparison (the mother) is omitted. Can this be seen as an example of the metaphor we have been studying about implicit metaphor?

- Student’s expected answer: No, it is not an implicit metaphor because the object of comparison is omitted.

12- Excellent! Because the term for the object of comparison is given explicitly, it is called an explicit metaphor. So we can conclude that only the term for the object of comparison determines whether it is explicit or implicit.

13- Now observe and explain the metaphor, identifying its type in the following examples:

1. Allah’s saying:

وَالشَّمْسِ وَضُحَاهَا” > “

(This is a metaphor for the brightness and clarity of the guidance).

2. “The sun sent its golden hair over the peaks and slopes of the mountains.”

- Type: Explicit metaphor (the sun is described as having hair).

3. “Time has bitten us.”

- Type: Implicit metaphor (time is compared to a biting creature).

4. “The floods covered the mountains of our sins and wiped them out.”

- Type: Explicit metaphor (the floods are compared to the act of erasing).

The teacher will guide the students to identify the terms used metaphorically in the context and to compare them with their literal meanings using the table below:

The word used metaphorically	The word giving the literal	Is the object of comparison explicitly	The clue and its type	Type of metaphor
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	<b>meaning</b>	<b>stated?</b>		
Lamps	The stars	Yes	We adorned the lower sky...(Verbal clue)	Explicit metaphor
Her golden hair	The rays	Yes	The sun has no hair...(Situational clue)	Explicit metaphor
Time (or fate)	The predator of the beasts!	No	We bite... with our fangs... (Verbal clue)  Time is not one of the beasts... (Situational clue)	Implied metaphor
Floods	Forgiveness	Yes	Floods do not erase sins...(Situational clue)	Explicit metaphor

**Second:** Characteristics of conversational maxims in this lesson (explicit metaphor)

By examining the different stages of this lesson, a simple observation can reveal several conversational maxims that the teacher relies on to facilitate the lesson material. These maxims bring the learner closer to the context of the sender, the receiver and the surrounding circumstances, making it easier for them to grasp the intentions and objectives. These features include those relating to linguistic context, situational context, the concept of presuppositions and Grice's general principles of discourse.

**1- The need to simplify the meaning of linguistic context and guide the meaning of structure**

The linguistic context of the metaphorical phrase (the proposed example for the lesson structure) should be clear to learners, ensuring that they are familiar with its dictionary meaning. This clarity will allow them to link meanings effectively, leading to a correct understanding. The learner should relate the end of the statement to the beginning and understand the grammatical structure to achieve the intended meaning of the linguistic context.

**For example:**

## **2- Relying on the context in its situational aspect:**

Without mentioning the occasion or clarifying the situation of the speaker and the listener, as well as the external circumstances surrounding the delivery of the speech, some examples may become closed puzzles. If the teacher were to present the poet's saying:<sup>11</sup>

He approached, walking on the carpet, not knowing whether he was going to the sea or to the moon.

This verse is being presented to the students for the first time, and they have no prior knowledge of the poets who enter the courts of the caliphs, praising them and exaggerating their praise in the hope of receiving gifts and gaining favour. The linguistic context, represented by the arrangement of words and structures, will not help the learners; instead, they may perceive it as a scientific fantasy, as if the subject of the verse had mounted a flying carpet, gone to the sea or ascended to the moon. At best, they may see a contradiction in the structure, struggling to reconcile walking on the carpet - an ordinary terrestrial action - with the realms of the sea and the stars.

Perhaps what reinforces this idea is Professor Massoud Sahrawi's discussion of context according to the theory of relevance, where he states that context "... consists of a set of 'contextual assumptions' derived from three sources:

1. Interpretation of previous statements: The propositions we obtain immediately after referring back to the beginning of the speech and interpreting it ... form an inseparable part of the context for interpreting the targeted statements in the discussion; it is essential to relate the end of the speech to the beginning.
2. The physical environment can also form part of the context, including any propositional representation that emerges from the place where the communication took place...
3. The memory of the central system contains ... various information about the world, some of which we use in the interpretive context..."<sup>12</sup>:

When the teacher informs the students that this verse was written by the poet Al-Mutanabbi, describing the Roman messenger entering the caliph's palace, heading towards where Sayf al-Dawlah, the Abbasid caliph, sits (the physical environment according to Massoud Sahrawi's description), and that the poet's aim was to praise and elevate the status of his subject, and that the poet intended to praise and elevate the status of his subject in order to gain honour and reward ('various information about the world' here refers to the realm of poets, praise and earning a living), the learner can easily explain the image by saying: There is an explicit metaphor in this verse, where Sayf al-Dawlah is compared to the sea, and the commonality between them (the shared characteristic) is generosity and giving. The verbal context is represented by the phrase "He approached, walking on the carpet". Then Sayf al-Dawlah is compared to the moon, with the commonality being elevation, light and all that is associated with the beauty of the moon.

The teacher may support the presentation of the situation with gestures, facial expressions and changes of tone to suit the intended meaning, in an attempt to evoke or summon external contexts from reality and present them as if the speaker were really present. This becomes more evident in lessons on declarative and imperative styles to clarify intended meaning, as illustrated in this lesson:

Question: What is the point of the similarity between the mother and the moon (the commonality between them)?

Answer: They resemble each other in beauty, brightness and elevation... (**The teacher can support the question with hand and finger gestures to illustrate the elevation, beauty and brightness of the moon to guide the answer**).

### **3- Prior knowledge or presupposition:**

The interlocutor or the teacher assumes that the students have a certain level of knowledge about various rhetorical concepts, especially regarding figurative images. By asking about the two sides of the similarity relationship, namely the subject and the object of comparison, we infer from the question that the students have prior knowledge of simile as a figurative expression based on these two components and the commonality between them, which is the point of similarity. It is therefore inconceivable for the teacher to present a lesson on metaphor if the learner has no understanding of simile.

On the other hand, the student's prior assumptions can have a significant impact on his or her understanding of the figurative image that uses 'the sea' to

symbolise a person's generosity. The student's prior knowledge that the sea is a creature often used as a metaphor for vastness, spaciousness and richness - a symbol of generosity and giving - enables him to interpret the metaphor by linking it to its context. All this helps to clarify and facilitate the rhetorical meaning.

In exploring prior presuppositions, we can demonstrate the realisation of this knowledge through questions posed by the teacher that presuppose the student's understanding of concepts relevant to the lesson. If the student lacks what we assumed he or she had based on the teacher's dialogue, the educational process will fail. Pragmatists argue that "presuppositions are of paramount importance in the process of communication and transmission of information. In didactics, the role of 'presuppositions' has long been recognised; it is impossible to teach a child a new piece of information without assuming the existence of a prior foundation on which to start and build. As for the manifestations of 'misunderstanding' that come under the heading of 'poor communication', they share a common cause: the weakness of the basic 'presuppositions' that are essential to the success of any verbal communication<sup>13</sup>.

#### **4. Grice's General Principles:<sup>14</sup>**

These are the rules formulated by Grice as pragmatic guidelines for linguistic dialogue, in what he termed the phenomenon of conversational implicature. There are four principles:

**1. The maxim of quantity:** This is represented by: "Make your contribution as informative as necessary" and "Do not make your contribution more informative than necessary". This principle is reflected in the way the teacher phrases questions so as not to distract the students. For example:

- "Is this statement figurative or literal?" (Statement 1)
- There is a word in the previous statement; if we replace it with another, the statement returns to its literal meaning. What is this word?" (Statement 2)
- "So the word 'moon' stands for metaphor or imagination, while 'mother' stands for the literal meaning." (Statement 3)

Here the teacher respects the maxim of quantity by providing the necessary amount of information to teach the learner a specific element of the lesson (the distinction between literal and figurative in statement 1) and (the ability to extract the metaphorical word and replace it with the appropriate literal term in

statement 2) (confirming the current information in the learner's mind - statement 3).

**2. The Maxim of Quality:** With its two components: "Don't say what you think is wrong" and "Don't say what you can't prove", there is no possibility of the teacher's statements being wrong, as this would seriously undermine the educational process. Furthermore, the principle of evidence is respected as it is easy to provide evidence for statements such as "This is called the verbal context..." If the teacher introduced this term without clarifying its meaning, he might be surprised by a student's question: "Why is it called verbal context?" Here it is necessary to provide evidence for this terminology and explain the reason for the statement: "It is called a context because it accompanies and is linked to speech, and it is called verbal because it is evident in the words mentioned...".

In addition to the above, respecting the stages of the lesson in accordance with the maxim of relevance is represented by the statement: "Make your contribution cooperative or let your contribution be consistent with the context of the conversation". Undoubtedly, the stages of the lesson were coherent, beginning with the first and ending with the last, in an effort to convey the elements of the topic in a logical way, as follows:

**Introduction:** It was introduced easily with two simple, clear statements to illustrate the original meaning in the language (literal meaning).

**Building knowledge:** **The interlocutor** (the teacher) then presented a new sentence constructed from the content of the previous two sentences that were displayed (figurative meaning).

The students were asked to discriminate between the sentence without figurativeness and its counterpart with figurativeness in order to identify the word that caused the change and shifted the statement from literal to figurative.

They were asked to identify the reason for replacing the word "moon" (the alternative) with the word "mother" or to explain the point of similarity or commonality, which is an advanced stage of rhetorical reasoning that cultivates the learner's taste.

Finally, the students were asked to identify the term given in the sentence and the term left out, so that they could recognise the name of this rhetorical figure and understand the conditions for its realisation.

As for **the maxim of style**, its essence is: “Avoid ambiguity and confusion; strive for brevity and clarity”. The interviewee was remarkably faithful to this, particularly in keeping the educational questions brief and clear without ambiguity. The expected response from the student is limited in possibilities and almost exclusively leads to the required answer without any difficulty in understanding it.

### **Conclusion:**

On the basis of the above, we summarise the main features of pragmatics observed in the teaching of the lesson on explicit metaphor for the secondary level as follows:

-The relationship between the components of the examples on which the lesson is based - linking their dictionary meanings to their linguistic context - is essential to enable the student to grasp the metaphorical dimension and compare it with the literal meaning, so that he/she can grasp its imaginary meaning in accordance with the overall purpose of the discourse.

-By mentioning the occasion of the speech and clarifying the situation of the speaker and the listener, as well as the external circumstances surrounding the delivery of the speech, the teacher unlocks the complexity of figurative expressions. The situational context serves as a verbal or situational clue that enables the student to distinguish between metaphor and reality and to understand the commonality between them based on the overall intention of the statement or discourse as a whole.

-The teacher can illustrate the context of the speech through gestures, facial expressions and changes in tone of voice in line with the intended meaning, attempting to evoke or conjure up external contexts from reality and present them as if the speaker were really present.

-In constructing the knowledge for this lesson, it seemed to us that the teacher respected the principles of communication that achieve the objectives of the lesson, specifically the maxim of quantity, the maxim of quality with its two components, and the principle of evidence. In addition, the phases of the lesson were respected in accordance with the maxim of relevance and the maxim of style.

### **Footnotes:**

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- <sup>12</sup>- Massoud Sahrawi, Pragmatics among Arab Scholars, p. 38-39.
- <sup>13</sup>- Massoud Sahrawi, Pragmatics among Arab Scholars, p. 32.
- <sup>14</sup>- For Grice's principles, see: Massoud Sahrawi, Implicated Actions in Speech: Between Contemporary Thought and Arab Heritage, Doctoral Thesis, Batna University, Algeria, Academic Year 2003-2004, pp. 60-61.

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