**Effect of Metaphoric Mapping Instruction (MMI) on Iranian EFL Learners’ Recognition and Retention of Figurative Language**

The present study aimed at investigating the potential effects of a cognitive-based metaphoric
mapping instruction (MMI) approach on Iranian English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners’
recognition and retention of figurative language at different levels of English proficiency. To do so, 90 upper-intermediate and lower-intermediate Iranian EFL learners were chosen from an English language institute based on the institute’s placement criteria. Then, they were assigned into a control group that received no instruction in MMI and two experimental groups consisting of upper-intermediate and lower-intermediate learners, respectively, who did receive instruction in MMI. The results of the pretests and posttests demonstrated that MMI significantly increased EFL learners’ recognition and retention of figurative language; moreover, upper-intermediate learners showed greater progress in noticing expressions with more abstract mapping relations. Additionally, MMI assisted learners at a lower proficiency level to recognize and retain more advanced language ability, beyond their current level. These findings support positive claims for a cognitive perspective on second language acquisition as well as the benefits of MMI instruction in the EFL classroom.

Key words: figurative language, metaphoric mapping instruction (MMI), recognition, retention