

IMPROVING THE COGNITIVE APPROACH OF METAPHOR TEACHING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE (IN THE EXAMPLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE)

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Abstract: *The article proposes to consider the assessment of metaphorical abilities as part of the measurement of the assessment of pragmatic competence. In this regard, the author aims to describe the principles of teaching a foreign language, taking into account the possibilities of forming metaphorical competence and assessing the level of its formation as an important component of pragmatic competence, important for effective intercultural interaction.*

Key words: *metaphorical competence, pragmatic thinking, metaphorical thinking, intercultural interaction, foreign languages, methods of teaching foreign languages.*

INTRODUCTION

The word language is not easily defined without reference to the context in which it is used. Knowing a language means knowing how to produce and understand sentences with particular meaning. Moreover, it is plain to everyone, linguist and non-linguist alike, that very little human communication through language is confined to isolated sentences. To be of more than immediate and limited value in communication, a sentence must stand in relation with other sentences (Chapman, 1982). Given a set of sentences, our knowledge of the language leads to a judgment about whether the sentences follow the normal patterns of a language or not. We have the capacity to determine when a sentence has more than one meaning or when several sentences all have the same meaning. The notion of a text is semantic rather than grammatical and a sentence in a text, which is always grammatically correct, is seldom semantically complete. It gains meaning either from other sentences with

which it is being used or written or from other sentences with which it occurs. Learning about language is obviously a process of analysis, of explicit attention and conscious reflections on the forms and functions of language and on the means by which meaning is made. Literary texts are examples of language in use. Nevertheless, literature frequently contains deviations from accepted norms, that is, language which is different from what may be loosely termed the ‘normal’ or ‘everyday’ usage of speech community, yet which is intelligible to the members of that discourse community, if they are willing to apply a special standard of acceptability. Brumfit and Carter (1986) argue that “these deviations maybe lexical, as in the use of neologisms, archaisms, compounds or one part of speech as another, or they maybe grammatical involving departures from syntactical or morphological rules or semantic as in the use of metaphors”.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Figurative language, especially the metaphor, has received considerable attention from a foreign language perspective in recent years (Cooper, 1999; Deignan, Gabrys, & Solska, 1997; Kovecses & Szabo, 1996; Lazar, 1996). This renewed interest in pedagogical approaches to figurative language has been fuelled by the gradual introduction of cognitive-semantic metaphor theory (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1986, 1987) to the field of applied linguistics (Low, 1988) and psycholinguistics (Gibbs, 1993). An important idea in contemporary cognitive science is that the metaphor is not just an aspect of language, but constitutes a significant part of human cognition (Gibbs, 1993; Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Sweetser, 1990). In the cognitive study of metaphor, an emphasis is made on the psychological as well as on the socio-cultural and linguistic aspects of metaphor. From a psychological point of view, the metaphor highlights the phenomenon of semantic creativity, the capacity of language users to create and understand novel linguistic combinations.

METHODOLOGY

Later on, we worked on other metaphors through numerous activities (see section 4), such as anger is heat, responsibilities are weights, feeling happy is like being high up or moving upward, feeling sad is like being low down or like falling, etc. and their corresponding expressions, in order for students to be able to identify metaphors, add expressions to different categories and detect equivalents in their mother tongue. Finally, other common metaphors were discussed (ideas are food, love is a journey, affection is warmth, etc.) and pupils were provided with resources (web links and reference manuals), so that they had the tools to progress in their learning autonomously. We follow a communicative methodological approach since oral communication is the main means of learning the language in our subjects. Our classes are taught entirely in English and have an eminently practical nature. In this section we describe the activities and sequencing of the taught contents. We dedicated 6 sessions to the project. We analyzed what a metaphor is and how it works and pointed out the importance of metaphors that are part of everyday language. We also showed them a folder created on the virtual platform (Blackboard) called 'Language awareness in which, following the guidelines established in the face-to-face sessions, they would find information, activities and web links for further practice, as well as the so-called 'metaphor boxes explained in the article by Moon (2002). These metaphorical boxes are made up of 66 words. Each of them is associated with one or more metaphors and their corresponding instantiations. Here is an example:

This is a big opportunity for me. ♦He is the greatest writer of the twentieth century. ♦It is a sizeable / massive achievement. ♦These are weighty matters. ♦Her ideas carry a lot of weight with the boss. ♦She's a performer who has grown in stature. ♦They are the only intellectual heavyweights in the government. ♦I have two little points to make. ♦There are some tiny mistakes to correct. ♦The novel seems very lightweight / thin / slight. ♦I don't expect you to be impressed –it must seem very small beer / potatoes to you. ♦I'd rather be a big fish in a little pond than the other way around.

CONCLUSION

Although the importance and relationship between metaphoric competence and communicative competence was analyzed in this study, it can be pointed out that this subject matter closely involves cognitive variations and is related to one's personality, which is interwoven with the second culture of learning. The ability to interpret metaphors quickly in conversation can be a crucial element of interaction. The same conceptual metaphors in different languages are realized through different linguistic expressions and L2 learners find it difficult to use metaphors appropriately. What contextual conditions facilitate or inhibit the access of conceptual metaphors in language processing, at what point during the moment-by-moment processing of idioms conceptual metaphors are accessed, and how the activations of conceptual metaphors persist when idioms are understood are important questions for further research. Although the metaphor is claimed to be a neglected dimension in second language teaching (SLT) and second language acquisition research (SLAR), this study quite rightly claims that it is necessary to integrate metaphorical language in L2 curriculum, which could lead to not only linguistic and metaphorical competence but it also enhances their communicative competence.

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