MODERN TRENDS
IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING
AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS

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The present volume publishes the proceedings of the international academic conference held on 11 April, 2014 at the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute. During the event, the participants worked in two sections. In the first one, presentations on language pedagogy could be heard, while in the second one participants discussed applied linguistic issues. The internationally known and acknowledged plenary speakers and presenters spoke about the most modern trends of their research areas. The written-up version of the presentations has been collected and published in one volume so that they could reach a wider audience.

Jelen kötet a 2014. április 11-én a II. Rákóczi Ferenc Kárpátaljai Magyar Főiskolán megtartott nemzetközi tudományos konferencia írott anyagait tartalmazza. Az eseményen két szekcióban folyt a munka. Az egyikben nyelvpedagógiai, a másikban alkalmazott nyelvészeti kutatásokról hangzottak el előadások. A nemzetközileg ismert és elismert előadók kutatási területeik legmodernebb irányzatairól értekeztek. Az előadások szerkesztett változatát egy kötetbe gyűjtöttük össze, hogy minél szélesebb szakmai közönséghez jusson el.

EDITORS: *Ilona Huszti* and *Ilona Lechner*
SZERKESZTŐK: *Huszti Ilona* és *Lechner Ilona*

Contents

IDIOMS BASED ON METAPHORS IN THE FLA PROCESS FROM A COGNITIVE LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Ilona Lechner

Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute
Department of Philology (English Language and Literature)
lechner.ilona81@gmail.com

Abstract:
The present study deals with methods of teaching idioms, comparing the cognitive linguistic and the traditional perspectives, their advantages and drawbacks. It briefly drafts the main theses of conceptual metaphor theory together with their expediency in applied linguistics and language pedagogy. It also discusses modes of defining idiomatic expressions, their cognitive motivation and the problems occurring during their acquisition. It presents representative research confirming that by enhancing the cognitive consciousness of learners we facilitate the memorization of figurative meanings.
Keywords: conceptual metaphor (CM) theory, foreign language acquisition, idioms, figurative meaning

1 Introduction: reasons for choosing the topic

In the process of foreign language acquisition learners face numerous hindrances. For the various age-groups the acquisition of different skills means a problem. While young learners normally succeed in vocabulary building, their elder companions acquire grammar structures within a shorter period of time. The greatest difficulty, however, lies in the acquisition of expressions and word-combinations the meaning of which is not equal to the complex meaning of their counterparts. The acquisition of idiomatic expressions bearing figurative meaning, their pragmatically correct application, in case of a lack of appropriate teaching methods takes up a huge amount of time. Naturally, it is not only the learner, but the language teacher too, who has to face problematic idioms, however, teaching of them to L2 learners is a necessary element in the field of FL teaching. Idioms, idiomatic expressions are often difficult for learners, as they seem to be so random and arbitrary.

Although idiomatic expressions appear on a higher level of language application, in order to produce communication of high standard it is inevitable to learn their meaning, since idiomatic expressions are used so widely and commonly in spoken and written language that L2 learners have to prepare themselves to meet the challenge of learning and understanding them (Boers, Lindstromberg, 2008).

The present study demonstrates the educational possibilities of idiomatic expressions from a cognitive linguistic point of view, comparing them to the traditional approach. In the first part the basic concepts will be clarified relying on the literature published concerning the topic, then, the second part will deal with

research which proves that idioms based on metaphors are more successfully and faster acquired by learners, provided that preference is given to methods represented by cognitive linguistics over the traditional way of learning by heart.

2 Defining idioms

To be able to see what the reason is that causes our hindrances during the memorisation and proper application of idioms, let us define what linguistic expressions we are dealing with. The linguistic categorisation and definition of idioms is problematic, since a great number of linguistic expressions can belong to the group. Proverbs, idiomatic turns, sayings, locutions etc. can be mentioned here.

2.1 The Traditional View

The traditional linguistic typology is based on semantic, lexical, syntactic, functional and lexicographic approaches (Moon, 1998). According to this an idiom, or idiomatic expression is a group of words the meaning of which cannot be deduced from the individual words that form it. In other words, idioms are considered as fixed chunks with arbitrary and thus unpredictable meanings. This arbitrariness refers to the link between an idiom and its figurative meaning. Within the traditional approach idioms are handled as an exclusively linguistic phenomenon, a part of the mental vocabulary, which are independent of our system of concepts. Idiomatic expressions are also independent of each other, and thus can only be both syntactically and semantically characterised individually. There are only connections of meaning existing between idioms (Kövecses, 2010).

2.2 The Cognitive Linguistic View

The linguistic investigations of the last thirty years have been striving to confirm the opposite of the statements mentioned above, or at least to question their pertinence. Concerning the classification of idioms Gibbs (1994) represents a perspective substantially more flexible than the traditional aspect. To his mind, "it is suggested that a conceptual syllabus should contain idioms, which beyond any doubt appear to be linguistic expressions of conceptual metaphors/metonymies, that is imageable idioms or metaphorical idioms or more general figurative idioms" (Andreou, Galamantos, 2008, p. 74).

Kövecses (2010) studies the semantics of idioms in detail and summarises the position of cognitive linguistics on the topic. The main theses are the following:

- The meanings of idioms are not completely predictable, but it is suggested that a large part of an idiom's meaning is motivated.
- Idioms have psychological reality. Most of the idioms are not merely part of the mental lexicon, but also a product of our conceptual system. It is

a phenomenon originating in the conceptual system based on our knowl-
edge of the world.
- There are at least three cognitive mechanisms that make the meanings of idi-
oms motivated: a) metaphor, b) metonymy, and c) conventional knowledge.

These cognitive processes connect given elements of a domain of knowledge
with the idiomatic meaning. Figure 1 demonstrates the conceptual motivation:

Figure 1. (Kövecses, 2010, p. 234)
Idiomatic meaning:
       the overall special meaning of an idiom
Cognitive mechanism:
       metaphor, metonymy, conventional knowledge (=domain(s) of knowl-
edge)
Conceptual domain(s):
       one or more domain(s) of knowledge
Linguistic forms and their meanings:
       the words that comprise an idiom, their syntactic properties, together
with their meanings
       In the following part conceptual metaphors will be discussed in detail to-
gether with idiomatic linguistic expressions founded on them.

3 About the conceptual metaphor (CM) theory

Metaphors are traditionally rated to poetic pictures considering their interpretation
to be the task of litterateurs. According to this, the function of metaphors is the
reaching of some kind of artistic or rhetorical effect.
       The cognitive linguistic theory of conceptual metaphors was explained by La-
koff and Johnson (1980) in their book entitled Metaphors We Live By. It became
the basic literature cognitive linguists built upon during their further research.
In the phrasing of Kövecses (2005), the conceptual metaphor from a cognitive
linguistic perspective is the comprehension of a conceptual domain through the
terms of another conceptual domain. He states that "metaphors are applied by or-
dinary people without the least of efforts (without being aware of that), it is not the
privilege of exceptionally talented people" (Kövecses, 2005, p. 14). The linguistic
exhibition of conceptual metaphors is metaphoric linguistic expressions.
       Conceptual metaphors consist of two parts, a source domain and a target do-
main. With the help of the factual concepts of the source domain, through them
we understand the abstract concepts of the target domain. The process is always
unidirectional, we advance from the concrete towards the abstract. Love as an ab-
stract concept, for instance, can be perceived as fire, business, bond, journey, war
and we could go on listing source domains (Kövecses, 2010).

Between the two domains there are correspondences, so called mappings, conceptual metaphors can be imagined as a system of mappings. To see clearly, let us take an example. We often hear such expressions from couples as 'We've made a lot of headway', 'We're at a crossroads', 'The relationship is foundering', 'It's been a bumpy road', etc. These idiomatic expressions are built on the cognitive metaphor: LOVE IS A JOURNEY, which has the following mapping system (Kövecses, 2010, p. 9):

Source: JOURNEY		*Target: LOVE*
the travellers	→	the lovers
the vehicle	→	the love relationship itself
the journey	→	events in the relationship
the distance covered	→	the progress made
the obstacles encountered	→	the difficulties experienced
decisions about which way to go	→	choices about what to do
the destination of the journey	→	the goal(s) of the relationship

Seeing the mappings pictured above we could assume that it is too complicated, only linguists are able to produce such analysis, the ordinary language user is not. To be able to apply and comprehend metaphoric linguistic expressions, idioms in our everyday communication, there is no need for such a detailed analysis. A great deal of the cognitive process is not conscious. We apply metaphoric linguistic expressions in accordance with the requirements of the cultural and social circumstances of a given language community, choosing those source domains during the cognitive processing, which are common in the given community (Kövecses, 2005).

4 How is the theory related to idiomatic expressions?

A mutual connection is demonstrable between conceptual metaphors and idiomatic expressions, though not every expression based on a conceptual metaphor is an idiom, and not all idioms are founded on conceptual metaphors.

However, based on the discussions above we can state that idioms are compositional and motivated, since their occurrence in the language can be retraced to certain cognitive mechanisms, for instance to metaphors, metonymies and to conventional knowledge. Cognitive methodology reveals hidden cognitive connections in idioms (Andreou, Galamantos, 2008).

Psycholinguistic studies have investigated the metaphorical motivation for idiomatic meaning empirically. One way to discover the speakers' tacit knowledge of the metaphorical basis for idioms is through a detailed examination of speakers' mental images of idioms.

The consistency of the idiom images is due to the "constraining influence of conceptual metaphors" according to which the underlying nature of our thought

process is metaphorical; this means that we use metaphor to make sense of our experience. Consequently, when we come across a verbal metaphor, the corresponding conceptual metaphor will be automatically activated (Carrol, 2008, p. 147).

5 Methods of teaching idioms

5.1 The traditional view

The fact, that idioms are considered to be lexical units independent of our system of concepts, unconnected with each other, makes their acquiring significantly more difficult. Traditional methodology gives preference to direct and explicit methods. Translation has been regarded as the most direct way of understanding idiomatic expressions.

Idiomatic expressions rated to phraseological units can be taught by a didactic method divided into four steps. The first step is recognition, followed by decipherment and recording and in the end by application (Gündoğdu, 2007). This process, however, is time- and effort-consuming, as well as impractical. The largest drawback of traditional methods is that idioms thus remain in the memory for a shorter period of time, as they are conceptually connected to nothing.

5.2 The Cognitive Linguistic View

To seek logical arrangements of idioms and put them in a more meaningful learning context for L2 learners, researchers (Kövecses & Szabó 1996) have devoted themselves to looking for certain systematicity in idioms.

Kispál (2011) in his research features a multiple-stage teaching process. As the first step the teacher chooses a target domain, for example ANGER, JOY, HAPPINESS, LOVE, to which idioms are connected. In the following stage, we focus on a concrete source domain connected to the target domain that is on a certain conceptual metaphor, which is easy to trace back for the students. Then the teacher collects idiomatic expressions related to the conceptual metaphor given, which can possibly be found in authentic texts as well.

The recognition of metaphoric motivation of idioms is of especially great help in the learning process, if the idiom has no or just partly adequate form in the mother tongue.

Nevertheless, certain conditions must be provided to be able to perform a concept-oriented activity.

1) Not only the teacher, but the foreign language learner too, has to be aware of the essence of conceptual metaphor theory. We will face a hindrance if learners fail to recognize the underlying structure, not being able to recognize the conceptual metaphors.

2) The teacher has to develop teaching materials, tasks which make use of the possibilities offered by cognitive linguistics.

It is crucial to emphasise that a conceptual syllabus has to be seen as a complementary means of metaphor and idiom instruction and not as the only one (Andreou, Galamantos, 2008).

Empirical researches confirm that if we draw the students' attention to the metaphoric motivation of the idiom, it remains in their memory for a longer time. Beréndi, Csábi, Kövecses (2008) conducted a research involving Hungarian students with an upper-intermediate level of English dividing them into a control group and an experimental group. The hypothesis was that students' awareness of underlying CMs facilitates comprehension and retention of idioms.

The materials of the investigation were idioms based on ANGER-metaphors. As a result they came to the conclusion that explicitly relating idioms to their underlying CMs helps learners to comprehend and remember them.

Seyyed, A. K., Seyyed, M. A., Masoumeh, B. (2013) conducted a research with a questionnaire containing 20 Persian idioms, with the participation of 40 native speakers of Farsi. The research included the following parts:

1) asking about the causes of actions in their mental images;
2) the regularity in people's conventional images for idioms is solely due to their figurative meaning (control group)
3) 20 non-idiomatic expressions were also presented.

During the research it turned out that there has been a significant similarity among the participants' mental images for idioms. The results suggest that the conceptual metaphor underlies the comprehension of idioms.

The study of Yi-chen Chen & Huei-ling Lai (2013) presents an investigation of the potential pedagogical implements of using metaphoric mappings in teaching English idioms to L2 learners. Participants were 19 university students in Taiwan, their English proficiency was from intermediate to high-intermediate level. The materials of the investigation were descriptive and narrative essays. As the first step of the research participants were asked to write a three- to four-paragraph essay describing an experience of being extremely angry. In the next step the students were introduced to the concept of metaphors and conceptual metaphor, then, finally, the students were told to revise their first draft at home, and were encouraged to integrate as many idiomatic expressions as possible. It turned out, that there are differences in the use of metaphors. The differences regarding frequencies of uses may have resulted from the differences between Chinese and English cultures.

5.3 Metaphorical competence /awareness

In the theory described in the previous chapter metaphor awareness/competence, a concept introduced to the literature by Danesi (1986), plays a central part.

Metaphoric awareness refers to language learners' enhanced awareness of metaphor and its function in the language. A language learner with metaphor awareness is the one who can identify a metaphor in various forms, such as nominal metaphor, verbal metaphor and adverbial metaphor, after realizing the fact that metaphors exist in all languages and gaining a knowledge of the formation of metaphors.

Metaphoric competence is considered to be an essential component of communicative competence (Danesi, 1986, p. 3).

In his later work he explained the connection between metaphoric competence and foreign language teaching as follows: "programming of discourse in metaphorical ways is a basic feature of native-speakers' competence. It underlies what I have designated conceptual fluency as a „competence", it can be thought about pedagogically in ways that are parallel to the other competences that SLT has traditionally focused on (grammatical and communicative)" (Danesi, 1993, p. 493).

6 Summary

Summarising the problem described it can be stated that traditional methods of teaching English idioms focus on rote learning and memorization. Such a rigid learning process might be time- and effort-consuming, as learners pick up idioms discretely without associations between forms and meanings.

With the advanced development in research of cognitive linguistics, ways of teaching idiomatic expressions have shifted to the idea of raising learners' awareness of conceptual metaphor, the underlying motivation behind idioms. The one who knows how certain conceptual metaphors (CMs) and metonymies structure the meanings of idioms will comprehend and remember these words and idioms better than learners who do not have such knowledge.

The central interest of a foreign language teacher is the integration of raising metaphor awareness of learners in foreign language teaching and the developing the ability of the learners to comprehend idioms that is needed for increasing their foreign language proficiency.

When using metaphoric mappings in understanding two conceptual metaphors, the participants may easily relate them together due to their dialectical nature. For FL learners who have less exposure to the target-language environment, a possible learning difficulty may occur due to their unfamiliarity of cultural conventions which are embedded in conceptual metaphors. To bridge the methodological and pedagogical gaps, an alternative method which integrates metaphoric mappings in the learning process is proposed.

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Contributors

Magda Ajtay-Horváth is College professor at the Department of English Language and Literature of the College of Nyíregyháza. Her professional interest covers the interface area between linguistics and literature: stylistic studies, comparative stylistics, translation studies, pragmatics and text linguistics. She is the author of two books: *A szecesszió stílusjegyei az angol és a magyar irodalomban.* (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület, 2001) and *Szövegek, nyelvek, kultúrák.* (Nyíregyháza: Bessenyei György Könyvkiadó, 2010).

Erzsébet Bárány is a teacher of Ukrainian. She has obtained her PhD in Slav Linguistics. Her research focuses on Rusyn borrowings in Hungarian. Besides, she is interested in teaching Ukrainian in the Hungarian schools of Transcarpathia. She has carried out research into this area investigating the learners' general knowledge of Ukrainian.

Csilla Bartha is senior research fellow and Head of the Research Centre for Multilingualism in the Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and also Associate Professor at Eötvös Loránd University. Her primary interests lie in sociolinguistics; bi- and multilingualism, linguistics minorities, minority education, Deaf communities and Sign Languages, linguistic human rights (language maintenance, revitalization, minority education).

István Csernicskó is a teacher and researcher of sociolinguistics. He holds a PhD and a CSc in Hungarian linguistics. He is director of the Hodinka Antal Research Institute. He is the author of numerous books, research articles, and chapters of edited books. He is the member of the editorial boards of three academic journals (*Acta Academiae Beregsasiensis, Anyanyelv-pedagógia* and *Regio*.

Márta Fábián has been teaching English at the Hungarian Grammar School in Beregszász since 1996, and since 1997 – at the Ferenc Rákóczi II. Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute. Between 2007 and 2010 she completed a PhD course at Pannon University. Since 2012 she has been working as a consultant and supervisor of foreign language teaching at the department of education of Beregszász district.

Gyula Fodor did his PhD studies at the Doctoral School of Earth Sciences of the University of Debrecen, Hungary. He obtained his PhD degree in 2010. His main research interest is the improvement of human resources of Transcarpathia from the inter-ethnic point-of-view. He is the author of *A humán erőforrások állapota és a nemzetiségek közötti viszony Kárpátalján* (2012, Debrecen).

Jerrold Frank is the Regional English Language Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv, Ukraine. In addition to all of Ukraine, Jerrold manages and supports English language programming for the U.S. State Department in Moldova, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. Prior to joining the State Department in 2011, Jerrold taught at a University in Japan for 22 years. He has also taught and trained teachers in the United States and Korea.

Beatrix Henkel graduated from the Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute in 2005 majoring in English. In 2006 she started her PhD studies in Language Pedagogy at Eötvös University, in Hungary. In 2013 Beatrix defended her dissertation, the title of which was *The attitude and motivation of learners of Ukrainian and English in Transcarpathia*.

József Horváth is associate professor at the University of Pécs, Hungary. His research focuses on the cross section between corpus linguistics and writing pedagogy. He has published two monographs about questions related to these fields, most recently last year. His current research aims to capture what makes student fiction and non-fiction writing in EFL original.

Ilona Huszti, PhD teaches and researches language pedagogy in Transcarpathia. Her research interests include reading in EFL, teaching English and Ukrainian in the Hungarian schools of Beregszász and English teacher training issues in Transcarpathia. She is author of two books: about reading miscues in EFL and a general methodology book for foreign language teachers.

Éva Illés teaches at the Department of English Applied Linguistics at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. She holds a PhD in ESOL from the Institute of Education, University of London. She has a wide range of experience, including teaching English in Britain and Hungary. Her current research interests are pragmatics, ELF, ELT and teacher education.

Júlia Kovács During her undergraduate studies she was granted with a scholarship to Japan, where she studied Japanese language and culture. She graduated as an English teacher at the University of Pécs and she is currently enrolled in the PhD program of English Applied Linguistics at the University of Pécs, in Hungary.

Ilona Lechner is a third-year PhD student at the Cultural Linguistics Program of the Linguistics Doctoral School of ELTE University, Budapest. Her research area is cognitive linguistics, within which she focuses on cognitive metaphor theory. She has been teaching German at the Ferenc Rákóczi II. Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute since 2005.

Anita Márku obtained her PhD in psycholinguistics. At present, she is Postdoctoral Researcher at Linguistics Institute, Hungarian Academy of Science, Research Center for Multilingualism in Budapest, Hungary and a researcher at the Antal Hodinka Institute of the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute, Beregszász/Berehovo, Ukraine.

Péter Medgyes is professor emeritus of applied linguistics at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. Previously, he was a schoolteacher, teacher trainer, vice rector of his university, deputy state secretary at the Hungarian Ministry of Education, and ambassador of Hungary posted in Damascus. Professor Medgyes is the author of numerous books and articles, including *The Non-Native Teacher* (1994, winner of the Duke of Edinburgh Book Competition), *Changing Perspectives in Teacher Education* (1996, co-edited with Angi Malderez), *A nyelvtanár [The Language Teacher]* (1997), *Laughing Matters* (2002), *Mi ebben a vicc? [How is This for Fun?]* (2008) and *Aranykor – Nyelvoktatásunk két évtizede: 1989-2009 [Golden Age – Twenty Years of Foreign Language Education in Hungary: 1989-2009]* (2011). His main professional interests lie in language policy, teacher education, and humour research.

Marianna Negre is a former graduate of the Ferenc Rákóczi II. Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute. Now, she is doing Masters Studies at the University of Pannonia, Hungary. Being multilingual herself, her main research interest is multilingualism from the language pedagogy perspective. Currently she is also a volunteer at the American Corner, in Veszprém.

Ildikó Orosz is president of the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute. She holds a PhD and a Kandidat Nauk degree in pedagogy. Her main research interest focuses on Hungarian minority education in Transcarpathia. She is author of numerous academic articles and monographs. Since 1991 she has been president of the Transcarpathian Hungarian Pedagogical Association.

Krisztina Pecsora graduated from Ferenc Rákóczi II. Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute and did her Masters degree at Uzhhorod National University in 2011. Since 2013 she has been a PhD student at Eszterházy Károly College in the Pedagogy Doctoral Program, majoring in language pedagogy. She is a second-year trainee at Collegium Talentum.

Granville Pillar, PhD is a lecturer at the University College of Nyíregyháza, Hungary, and teaches at the Institute of Linguistics and Literary Studies. Originally from Northern Ireland, he has worked in South Africa, Germany and Australia. He holds degrees in the fields of Education, Applied Linguistics, Electrical Engineering and Theology.

Katalin Szerencsi, PhD has been involved in ELT for 40, and teacher training for 25 years. In her PhD, she investigated the grammatical competence differences between non-native and native speaker teachers of English. Her recent research interests include issues in cognitive semantics, linguistic creativity, and language play.

Krisztina Szőcs is a Geography and EFL teacher in a secondary school in Hungary with 12 years of teaching experience. She is also a 2nd year doctoral school student with special interest in teachers' beliefs and learner autonomy.

Tamás Vraukó obtained his doctoral degree in linguistics from Lajos Kossuth University, Debrecen, 1994, and his PhD in American Literature from the University of Warsaw, 2004. He was a lecturer/senior lecturer at György Bessenyei College of Higher Education, Nyíregyháza, Hungary between 1988-2011. At present he is senior lecturer at the University of Miskolc. His research interests include British and American history and translation studies.

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