SAJMMR

ISSN: 2249-877X Vol. 11, Issue 6, June 2021, Impact Factor: SJIF 2021= 7.642

South Asian Journal of Marketing & Management Research (SAJMMR)

(Double Blind Refereed & Peer Reviewed International Journal)

DOI: 10.5958/2249-877X.2021.00042.4

THE ROLE OF COGNITIVE LINGUISTIC APPROACH IN IMPLEMENTING IDIOMS INTO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

This article adopts a cognitive linguistic approach to idioms as motivated lexical units. The focus is on lexicographic applications of the notion of motivation; specifically, on the usefulness of imagery in the form of pictorial illustrations and etymological notes in idioms dictionaries. We discuss the main features of idiom semantics, review the results of research into the influence of motivating information on idiom acquisition, and outline the issue of imagery in idiom entries, highlighting the problems involved. Our findings point to a facilitative role of pictorial illustrations on short- and long-term retention of both form and meaning of idioms. In contrast, etymological notes do not have any positive effect.

KEYWORDS: *Cognitive Linguistics, Lexical Units, Cognitive Capabilities, Cognitive Skills, Cognitive Linguistic Approach.*

INTRODUCTION

The main objective of cognitive linguistics is to study cognitive capabilities of a person using certain methods and tools. The analysis of different languages enables linguistics to find common features and the form common rules. Here, cognitive skills are the essential qualities which are utilized to think, listen, understand, justify, question and pay close attention.

When language learners start to acquire language, they build first on categories that have already discriminated. The conceptual representations they set up in their first year for objects, relations, properties and events provide a broad cognitive basis onto which they can map words from learner-directed speech.

Language learning is crucial for a learners' developmental trajectory. Language skills enable a child to communicate with others in his or her environment, which encourages the development of cognitive skills a and promotes socio-emotional regulation through social interactions.

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In some cases, learners have these units in their passive vocabulary but face difficulties in practicing them. This obstacles or shortcomings triggered the introduction of a nontraditional way of teaching *cognitive linguistic approach*. The vast majority of teachers argue that traditional way of teaching figurative language has become archaic and phraseological units are to be approached in a cognitive linguistic way, which suggests that some idioms have analyzable characteristics and the meanings can in fact be derived from the components (Kövecses 2000; Cieslicka 2006; Boers, Frank and Lind Stromberg 2008).

Furthermore, the cognitive linguistic approach is often thought of as one of the most convenient methods in teaching idioms to the learners of the English Language since the aim is to teach the students how to use the idioms and not only to learn them by heart (Langlotz 2006; Chen and Lai 2013; Dacygier and Sweetser 2014).

Moreover, idioms have been considered as one of the fundamental areas to be taught in a foreign language classroom, especially when teaching English as a foreign language (Boers, Frank and Lind Stromberg 2008).

To complement this idea other group of scholars presented their assumptions as well. They are of the opinion that the importance of placing special emphasis on teaching idioms is due to their significance in native speakers' everyday language use and non-native speakers having difficulties with acquiring metaphoric language and having problems with understanding natural English (Schmitt 2000; Cieslicka 2006; Tran 2013).

It is essential to point that not only do idioms make the language livelier and add a dimension to it, but they also serve for the better acquisition of genuine English and successful intercultural communication. Since idioms are an inseparable part of culture and culture is reflected in the meanings of these language units, culture and idioms should be taught simultaneously. Cultural awareness is complementary in teaching process of idioms.

Taking into account all aforementioned ideas and theories, the cognitive linguistic approach presents a promising substitute to traditional methods of teaching idioms to EFL learners. So, if we dig deep the evolution of this novel way of nontraditional teaching, cognitive Linguistic approach is a contemporary school of linguistic belief which firstly appeared in 1970s.The earliest developers who were displeased with traditional and dull approaches to language of the US were the founders of this novelty. Their research in 1970s was supervised by a group of scholars from the United States as well.

Soon afterwards, around 1980s the contrastive linguistic approach was developed in Europe. Currently, this way of teaching is considered seriously and being studied as the main branch of theoretical linguistics in the world (Evans, 2007).

As Tyler argues, cognitive linguistic approach focuses on the social and physical world, human cognitive processes which take place in brain and language and the connections between them (Tyler, 2012).

Evans (2007) states that "Cognitive linguistic approach accentuates the central importance on the role of meaning, conceptual processes and embodied experience in the study of language and the mind and the way they intersect"[1]. Additionally, Evans (2007) is of the opinion that cognitive linguistics cannot be accepted as a theory, but rather an approach or an enterprise. Furthermore, cognitive linguists endeavor to find systematicity in language and patterns of thought, which means that studying language according to cognitive linguistics approach means to study patterns of conceptualization and the structures of the human mind as a whole (Evans and Green 2006). Tyler (2012) focuses on the importance of systematic, motivated explanation in language teaching because it will make interpreting and remembering of the encountered lexical items easier for the language learners.

Interestingly, he also adds that contrastive linguistics approves the theory of the importance of memorizing some amount of vocabulary, but also proposes an approach which allows lexical items and multiple meanings to be seen as motivated, which means reflecting a pattern that can provide a set of principles acting as a schema for acquiring new vocabulary (Tyler 2012).

Boers (2011) indicates that using cognitive linguistic approach in teaching figurative phrases seems as a useful channel for comprehending and remembering those phrases. He believes that his study of the existing evidence displays that the approach is beneficial for students' preservation of the meanings of the phrases, but not as much for remembering the form of the phrases.

Boers also states that in practice, in cognitive linguistic approach teaching figurative language should be based on imagery processing. That is to say, to cognitively infer the meaning of an idiom and for its long-lasting memorization a great deal of visuals such as pictures, photos, animations, videos and even related movies must be skillfully implemented. As an example, it is possible to show the pictures of angelic face or any white angel with its wings prior to explaining the meaning of the idiom "whiter than white". Learners have to guess and discuss the meaning and, finally, after coming to a proper conclusion the teacher should explain it with examples in context (contextualization). It is also reasonable to note that the acquisition process must not be completed with discussion: the point here is that the idiom should be thoroughly practiced through a variety proper activity as dialogue making, creative writing, reading, matching and so on.

Boers, Demecheleer and Eyckmans (2004) assume that "by associating idioms with their source domains, learners are likely to encode the items in their memory in a dual fashion, both as a verbal form and as a mental image of a concrete scene"[2]. In other words, most of the selected idioms involve the use of imagery processing (Boers and Demecheleer 2001, Szczepaniak and Lew 2011) or visuals (Irujo 1986). Some of the selected idioms employ both the imagery and etymological origin (Boers 2001) Boers, Eyckmans and Stengers 2007).

Surprisingly, Tyler (2012) reports that cognitive linguistic approach may not involve a guaranteed, unproblematic path to the second language learning process. Contrary to traditional methods to teaching figurative language, it is far from just memorizing language units. It requires more effort and can be time-consuming to reach the desired results. Recognizing this inevitable limitation, cognitive linguistics can present an approach to the second language learning with far fewer garden paths and needless dead ends.

The representatives of cognitive linguistics ignore the idea that the mind has any unique and autonomous language-acquisition device. This position is at odds with the generative grammar

approach (e.g., Chomsky, 1980). Although cognitive linguists do not necessarily disagree that part of human linguistic ability is innate and autonomous, they deny that it is separate or different from non-linguistic processes (e.g., retrieval of an event from memory).

Cognitive linguistics also hypothesizes that knowledge of language emerges from language use, which supports calls to account for language use in the real world, as language does not exist in a vacuum. In usage-based approaches, the emphasis is on the (dynamic) organization of linguistic knowledge, which consists of structured networks of 'constructions' as defined by construction grammarians (e.g., Fillmore et al., 1988) or the 'schemas' (mental representations) used by cognitive grammarians (Langacker, 1987).

Another theory suggests that since idioms can be approached in a cognitive linguistic way, which denotes that their meanings can be derived from the component parts of the idioms. This can be considered as a useful method for teaching idioms in an EFL classroom since the aim is for the students to gain knowledge of how to use the idioms and not only learn them by heart (Langlotz 2006;). This theory justifies the fact that before teaching idioms with a component of color manifesting the inner world of a person, first of all, colors and their symbolic meanings along with their psychological features should be studied closely. However, it is necessary that color understanding varies from culture to culture.

Regardless of the fact that cognitive linguistic approach is a relatively new way of teaching, a great deal of researches and experiments have been conducted worldwide.

Several researchers (Kövecses 2000; CharterisBlack 2002; Kömür and Cimen 2009) have discovered the ways of implementing the cognitive linguistic approach as a teaching method, namely, how to teach figurative language effectively. It is believed that the cognitive linguistic approach can assist with learning figurative expressions and provide organized pedagogical methods to the second language classroom (Charteris-Black 2002).

Quite a lot of studies worldwide have focused on experimenting with the cognitive linguistic approach to teaching idioms. For example, Skoufaki (2008) conducted an experiment to test cognitive linguistic approached idiom presentation method in the classroom. She practiced the study on Greek university students, who were studying various disciplines and she presented the students with two methods. She taught idiomatic expressions with both methods: first, she introduced the idioms to the students as well as their meanings and their conceptual metaphors and then, she presented the students with idioms and only conceptual metaphors, in which the students were supposed to guess the meanings behind the idioms.

Skoufaki's (2008) results exposed that virtually both methods appeared successful. Although, she highlights that the implementation of the cognitive linguistic approach (guessing method) most probably enhances the effectiveness. She also states that a great amount of guidance is needed and more clear instructions must be created in the classroom for this method to work.

Likewise, Piquez-Piriz (2008) conducted his research with young Spanish learners to assess their ability of coping with figurative meanings the language. Her results displayed that young learners of the English language took advantage of the pedagogical application of the cognitive linguistic approach and were readily capable of understanding figurative language.

Kömür and Cimen (2009) also implemented the cognitive linguistic approach in idiom teaching and as a result, they came to conclusion that using conceptual metaphors developed students' critical thinking and problem-solving. In addition, their results showed that opting for the

cognitive linguistic approach in the EFL classroom turned out to be beneficial, joyful and entertaining. Taking the obtained results into account, Kömür and Cimen (2009) resolved that according to their research language learners might find this approach as extremely useful and at the same time it would provide the classroom with an enjoyable and friendly atmosphere.

Berendi, Csabi and Kövecses (2008) agree that the cognitive linguistic approach in the foreign language classroom definitely enhances students' understanding of figurative language and they also claim that learners' awareness of the motivations behind meanings help with remembering figurative phrases better than the traditional method of memorizing the words through translations. They are totally in agreement with the idea of developing this approach as it still needs some modifications. Furthermore, it takes a great amount of time for the preparation of the teacher or instructor to deliver successful classes in this style of teaching.

Rodriguez and Moreno (2009), to test the applicability of this approach, delivered their lessons incorporating conceptual metaphors in teaching idiomatic expressions using Disney movies, which could be of great interest for young learners. They strived to draw students' attention to the emotional states of the characters and therefore, resolved including Disney animations. As a result, they reached the conclusion that utilizing conceptual metaphors is a great method, but also mentioned that the shortcoming would be the amount of time and effort a teacher should invest in it because processing the material and creating the links between conceptual metaphors can be time-consuming and more effortful than traditional methods (Rodriguez and Moreno 2009).

Last but not least, cognitive linguists are in agreement of opinions on this approach. That is to say, the cognitive linguistic approach is not perfected and although several studies have shown that it can in fact be used in EFL classroom, it still needs some modifications in order to become a fruitful teaching method. Most importantly, this approach is more beneficial and creative than traditional methods and these qualities makes the cognitive linguistic approach unique. It also allows the teachers to be passive in the process of teaching and creates a learning-centered or student-centered class.

From scientific perspective, the cognitive linguistic approach scrutinizes explanations stemming from learners' everyday world and experience; however, as every language accentuates slightly different aspects of human experience, therefore students might face difficulties in mapping the differences between their first and second language.

The present article aims to provide a comprehensive account of demonstrating the importance of the cognitive linguistic approach. This way of teaching can be considered as worthwhile and enjoyable substitute to the traditional method of teaching idioms, and hence to create more colorful and enjoyable atmosphere in the English classroom it should be used more frequently to achieve success in education.

To pursue the purpose of incorporating the cognitive linguistic approach in the EFL classroom steadily and ultimately, to achieve it we would suggest the following instructions:

1. Teaching idioms with a color component via the cognitive linguistic approach is a quite complex process and therefore, it requires much effort and careful consideration. Prior to teaching idioms, learners should be provided with the prudently planned information regarding color symbolism. It is important to keep in mind that color symbolism and meaning varies from culture to culture.

2. Idioms, as it is generally known, reflect culture. It would be reasonable to teach culture as a complementary for idioms and culture are closely interrelated. However, the main focus should be on idioms and cultural note is to be regarded as a supplementary source.
3. Teachers are anticipated to recognize the essentiality of being passive as a facilitator for this creates a student-centered class. As a result, learners are active and they have more opportunities to show their abilities.
4. The cognitive linguistic approach involves guessing strategies. These strategies can be numerous: guessing by the word content of the idiom, guessing by looking at the related picture of the idiom, guessing by watching movies, animations or videos, guessing by reading the related content and so on. We find it reasonable to point out that so as to make guessing easy and effortless, the teacher's skill to choose the right materials is vital as well.
5. The cognitive linguistic approach is way different from traditional methods of teaching. This approach rejects the idea of solely memorizing language units, but rather it is first and foremost aim is to explain the meaning of the idiom thoroughly. The cognitive linguistic approach also focuses on more practice. To be more precise, it's one of the major points is that learners should be able to use those learnt idioms in the context.
6. Idioms are the sign of authenticity and therefore, a range of authentic materials should be utilized in teaching process. They are newspapers, magazines, books, music, videos, movies and cartoons which are produced by native speakers. It is up to the teacher when and how to implement them: these sources could be given for guessing strategies or they might be helpful to consolidate the explained topic as post-activities.
7. Last but not least, the best way to improve learners' figurative language is to create specific writing classes. It could include both academic and informal writings. However, we would argue that creative writing classes are more beneficial for in this type of writing they are required to incorporate a particular group of learnt idioms in their piece of writing.

According to Docter (the author of the film), every emotion is created on a basic form: *Sadness on a teardrop, Joy on a star, Fear on a raw nerve, Anger on a fire brick* and *Displeasure on a broccoli.* So, unlike other emotions 'Fear' is not solely based on color symbolism, but it is born as a *'metaphor of nerve'*.

It should be noted that in linguistics the positioning of colors as certain emotions in "Inside Out" does not entirely bear parallels to the language units reflecting the inner world of a person. In most cases, color meanings and language units with a color constituent correspond.

Yet, there are some idioms which are slightly modified or contradict to a great extent. Researches show that experts of this field still have not succeeded in presenting a consensus of the correlation of color and idiomaticity. These issues can be illuminated in the following examples: yellow is known as the sign of happiness and courage. Contrary to this, the association of yellow in linguistics is not impressive. In idiomaticity it acquires ultimately, negative meanings such as the concepts of cowardliness and fright. The idioms *"a yellow dog"* and *"yellow"* indicate the trait of lacking courage.

The color green, negatively symbolized as displeasure in the film "Inside out", generally, stands for negative personal traits as jealousy, envy and gullibility which shows no evidence of concordance with displeasure. For instance, idioms *"green with envy"* and "*the green-eyed monster"* both carry the meaning extremely jealous.

As regards one of the basic colors red, it possesses the extremes of positive and negative features: on one hand, bravery, strength, energy and, on the other hand, defiance, aggression and anger. At this point the idioms *"see red", "red-necked"* and *"red-mad"* may be employed in experiencing fury and aggression. Sadness as well as Anger is skillfully expressed in the film by the fortunate choice of color blue for in English blue represents negative emotions such as sadness and depression in most cases. There are many *"melancholic idioms"* with blue in the English language which are used widely as *"blue", "blue funk", "sing the blues"* which demonstrate grief and low-spirit.

The chromatic analysis leads to a thorough insight into a clear perception of the correlation between colors and language units expressing the inner world of a person. Consequently, implementing the film which is accessible for both children and adults, would be an effective style of teaching to sidestep dull and dry lessons. Moreover, the film functioning as a visual art is apt to trigger a stimulus to studying and understanding idioms with a color component pertaining to emotions for, they are a vital part of successful language teaching and intercultural communication.

As cognitive perception of idiomatic language units involves active mental thinking, guessing for remaining them in long-term memory and of course, a great deal of practice we initially, showed the pictures of each main character (emotion) to activate students' proactive mental thinking and guessing skills. The students' task was to name those emotions with providing reasons.

In concluding part, we want to summarize the source of a person's inner world cognition which lies in the mind of each human being. As it is known, individuals and their interior worlds are distinct and therefore, they express themselves in a way that is not identical. Likewise, languages and cultures of the world as a unity have always been sustaining dissimilarities as well. Nevertheless, due to the fact that we are likely to promote universal language and mutual understanding over distinctiveness so as to make headway in communication and even in teaching process. It should hardly be necessary to highlight that being aware of colors and their meaning as well as their usage in idiomaticity would be the basis and fundament of solving this problematic issue.

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