

A CROSS-LINGUISTIC APPLICATION ON IDIOMS RENDERING A CONCEPTUAL SCHEMA

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Abstract

Figurative meanings such as idioms are widely admitted to be a stumbling block in the acquisition of a second language; it is often maintained that their 'arbitrary', language-specific nature makes it difficult for learners to acquire them, and render them resistant to translation. However, the contribution of phraseological language to attaining a high level of communicative competence is widely admitted (Lattey 1986; Nattinger & DeCarrico 1992; Howarth 1998; Littlemore & Low 2006) and proficient non-native speakers of any language may be complimented on their command of appropriate idiomatic language use.

Actually, lexical and phraseological competence may be asserted to make a greater contribution to achieving proficiency in a foreign language than grammar. Littlemore & Low (2006) demonstrate that metaphoric competence contributes to all aspects of communicative competence (grammatical, textual, illocutionary, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence) and are in favour of its incorporation in language syllabuses starting with low levels. The existent issue is thus not so much whether, but how to incorporate idiomatic language into language education.

Key words: Linguistics; Idioms; Language acquisition; Cognitive semantics; Multilingualism.

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