

THE ROLE OF METAPHORS IN THE TEACHING OF GERMAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

ELENA BELLAVIA
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DELLA BASILICATA

Abstract – Philosophers and linguists have always been aware of the importance of *metaphor* in the development of thought and language. However it was the founders of cognitive theories of metaphor Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who first focused their analyses on metaphors in everyday language. Their work generated great interest in many disciplines including psycho-linguistics where recent studies regarding first and second language acquisition have engaged with the role of metaphor in these processes (Mandler 1992, 2000, Butzkamm and Butzkamm 1999, respectively).

Within the ambit of foreign language teaching research, studies on metaphor have led to an orientation towards objectives regarding not just verbal fluency but also conceptual metaphoric fluency (Beißner 2002; Bellavia 2007, 2011; Boers & Lindstromberg 2008; Danesi 1993, 1995, 1998; Lazar 1996; Rösler 1985). This work is based on the assumption that a language pedagogy in line with the results of this research in linguistics and psycho-linguistics must consider its objectives to include the development of schemata and metaphorical associations as stable contents of learner memory to be drawn upon during the comprehension and production of texts. It will also offer several exercise types aimed at the development of “metaphoric competence” in German as a foreign language.

Keywords: metaphor, image schema, cognitive linguistics, foreign language teaching and learning, German as a foreign language.

1. Introduction

Philosophers and linguists have always been aware of the importance of *metaphor*¹ in the development of thought and language. However it was the founders of cognitive metaphor theory, Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who first focused their analyses on metaphors in everyday language. Their work generated great interest in many disciplines including psycho-linguistics, where recent studies regarding first and second language acquisition have engaged with the role of metaphor and *image schemata*² in these processes (Mandler 1992, Butzkamm and Butzkamm 1999, respectively).

It is only relatively recently that research into the teaching of German as a foreign language (*DaF*), and more generally in the area of foreign language teaching studies as a

¹ Within Cognitive Linguistics (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) – which is the theoretical framework of this paper – metaphors essentially entail “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (ibidem, p. 5). (The meaning of metaphor is clarified in section 1 of this paper).

² *Image schemata* (Johnson 1987) are one of the most important instruments of Cognitive Linguistics (see Luraghi & Gaeta 2004) and are defined as recurring structures within our cognitive processes which establish patterns of understanding and reasoning. Image schemata are formed from our bodily interactions, from linguistic experience, and from historical context (see also Luraghi & Gaeta 2004, p. 21). The meaning of image schemata and their relation to the metaphorical process are clarified in ch. 2 of this paper.

whole, has sought to evaluate the potential of a pedagogic grammar that takes account of the centrality of figurative thought and metaphorical processes in language acquisition (see for example Dirven 1989, 2001, Radden, 1989, 1994, Danesi 1993, 1995, 1998, Taylor 1993, Lazar 1996, Bellavia 1997, 2007, Boers, Demecheleer 1998, Boers 2000, Beißner 2002, Meex, Mortelmans 2002, Suárez Muñoz 2013).

This work is situated within the framework of these “pioneering” studies and aims to demonstrate potential applications of cognitive theories of metaphor in the field of teaching German as a foreign language.

This paper is divided into four chapters: the first, which is theoretical in nature, focuses on metaphors in daily conversation, re-affirming their role in language acquisition³ as well as in the development of linguistic systems. The second chapter analyses the theoretical linguistics which informs and guides the classroom activities in chapter three. The final chapter provides a summary of the objectives and teaching principles underlying the tasks proposed in this paper.

2. The role of metaphor in language

I would like to open this chapter with an invitation to the readers to participate in a sort of “thought experiment”.

Let us imagine a beginner to intermediate-level student of German as a foreign language (we will call her Anna and assume that her native language is Italian), who is sharing a house with a native German speaker (called Sina) on her first study trip to Germany. Let us further imagine the two girls sitting at their kitchen table and a hungry Sina saying the following words as she picks up a kiwi:

(1) *Bis zum Mittagessen dauert es noch lange. Ich esse eine Kiwi: es wird mir über den Weg helfen.*

‘It’s a long time to lunch. I’ll eat a kiwi: it will help me on the way.’

Let us also assume Anna is a highly motivated student who is not content to merely understand the linguistic content of the sentence in context but is keen to capture the authentic linguistic significance of the prepositional phrase “*über den Weg*”. What could possibly come to mind on hearing these words?

Given her elementary/intermediate knowledge of German, the first meaning she would probably attribute to the preposition “*über*” (‘over’) would be based on its spatial significance learnt in the classroom which is “above”. Unfortunately this would not be of much help to Anna, who would then turn to the other spatial meaning of the preposition, i.e. “across”, which is also much more probable in a context dealing with a path (“*Weg*”). At this point Anna may wonder what kind of path is being referred to. The echo of the words in the preceding sentence “*dauert es noch lange*” (‘it’s a long time’) would probably help her by bringing to mind the image of time passing along a line, which is also present in Italian [in Italian we say “*è stata una lunga giornata*” (‘it was a long day.’)]. Thus in one way or another Anna would probably grasp the sense of the phrase.

³ Although this paper focuses on formal lesson-based language learning, it also considers studies of natural learning processes. Cognitive psychology considers natural acquisition and learning processes to be complementary. For further discussion of the concepts of “natural acquisition” and “guided learning”, see Rösler (1994, p. 6).

In this fairly implausible process of interpretation, clearly described in an unorthodox manner,⁴ everything seems to hinge on luck or chance as well as on the intelligence and motivation of the student. However, it should be possible to draw on this to consciously develop and enhance student ability in class regarding conceptual linguistic knowledge. This would help students achieve the meta-linguistic competence necessary for the interpretation of the many metaphorical expressions which weave languages together.

Remaining with Anna a little longer, let us imagine that she had been given the possibility of studying prepositional polysemy in class, taking into consideration the metaphorical transparency of various contexts. On the basis of this acquired knowledge she would be in a position to correctly and consciously interpret the meaning of Sina's words. Thus, she would recognize that Sina perceived her situation as being at the beginning of a path or route leading naturally to lunch time and that the time period she was referring to was the interval between now and then. She would also understand that the kiwi fruit was the means or "bridge" which would help her get through that interval (in metaphorical terms, to endure until the goal was reached).

This example shows clearly that in understanding idiomatic expressions students rely on conceptual as well as linguistic knowledge (in this example making use of concepts linked to image schemata and metaphors). It is precisely this "conceptual competence"⁵ which ensures that the process of communication is not limited to understanding what a speaker (or text) "says" but above all what their discursive "intentions" are. The acquisition of this competence helps learners construct coherent meaning through perceived input and memorized categories and constitutes the basis of comprehension and learning processes. I refer here to Hörmann (1976), who argues that every new experience can only be understood if it is seen in relation to previously acquired concepts. From the point of view of this paper, new experiences correspond to foreign language texts, and the concepts which students must memorize in order to construct "coherent meaning" are image schemata and their relative metaphorical models. From this point of view, learning to interpret texts at any level involves engaging in a process of *matching* metaphorical domains. Thus communication is not seen simply as a problem of message "sending" but as one of "inference". In this framework, rather than being seen as kinds of postal packages, linguistic signs constitute the premise for potential interpretative deductions on the basis of knowledge of the metaphorical models at work in a given text.

⁴ It is obvious that in a normal situation, speakers do not construct the sense of linguistic expressions by computing the literal meaning of every word. On the contrary, they proceed holistically, only activating meanings relevant to the context (Hörmann 1976, Weinrich 1976, p. 131). The imaginary situation is therefore absurd but it is useful in describing non-native speaker communication in a foreign language. A foreign language student does not experience the "normal" conditions of a native speaker but passes only gradually from the decodification of "elementary – plus" discourses to the holistic ones typical of advanced learners or native speakers (on this point see Rohrer 1978, Storch 1999, p. 121, Bellavia 2007, pp. 7-9).

⁵ "Conceptual competence" represents the basis of "*conceptual fluency*" – discussed by Danesi (1995, 1998) – which consists of the ability to "translate" concepts into words, i.e. to go beyond the literal level and construct metaphorical expressions in communicative situations. This model is in agreement with Beißner (2002, p. 135), who argues that the study of vocabulary in different contexts helps learners to develop "*conceptual familiarity*", which contributes to the achievement of native speaker or very advanced communicative competence. It also confirms the need propounded in this paper to assign a central role in all teaching contexts to the polysemy of words regardless of their grammatical affiliation.

Behind all idiomatic expressions, including even the everyday phrase cited in the first example, there is a dynamic symbolic⁶ network, guiding thought and its verbal expression. These symbols belong to both collective and individual imagery and allow us to interpret our experiences and our lives, though we may not be conscious of their origin. An awareness of this metaphorical network should be seen as a rich resource, to be taught to students to enable them to become increasingly “expert” in interpreting the language.

It is important to bear in mind within a teaching context that the creation of metaphors is an innate imaginative faculty which plays a key role in both first language acquisition processes and the historical development of the linguistic system. With regard to the importance of metaphor in language acquisition, Butzkamm (1989, p. 89) emphasizes that this ability to find similarities and analogies between different objects (ibid., p. 94) is one of the evolutionist principles at the base of all forms of learning. In an example cited by Butzkamm (ibid.), if a person does not understand the German word *Kern* (“kernel”, of a pistachio for example), they can use a word they already know e.g. *Fleisch* (“flesh”) to indicate the internal edible part. Analogous connections, which occur spontaneously and largely intuitively, are nothing less than metonymic and metaphorical creations. They are often seen by speakers as errors because unlike conventionalized expressions [in our example, “*Fruchtfleisch*” is the word used to refer to the flesh of a fruit rather than a nut] they are not lexicalized idiomatic expressions. Nevertheless, they are among the most important meta-linguistic strategies developed in first language acquisition and transferred to second language learning. The creation of metaphors, which we must remember arises from a process of analogy between two different domains (i.e. that of our own experience and another that may be quite distant from it), is also a well known mechanism or “communicative strategy” used by foreign language students in compensating for lexical inadequacy.

The creation of analogies is thus at the basis of all forms of learning and consists of the projection of familiar schemata⁷ on to new contexts.⁸ This faculty, which assumes the capacity for abstraction, facilitates reaction to new unknown data. New experiences are integrated and adapted to older ones using these previously acquired tools. Particularly important from a teaching perspective is the fact that accessing and using previously acquired knowledge takes place through the direct application of schemata and is an essential basis for all forms of learning.⁹

⁶ The word “symbol” is not used here in its more modern sense of “conventional or arbitrary sign” but in its older usage of “sign activated by analogy” (Kurz 1997, p. 67).

⁷ The general term *schema* is used in the sense attributed to it within cognitive psychology: an organized and economic mental cognitive structure arising from the relationships among a multitude of objects (Slobin 1974, p. 107).

It should be noted that within psychological studies it has been shown that schemata facilitate better and deeper memorization of information (Bartlett 1932, Miller 1956, Paivio 1971, Bransford, Johnson 1972, Slobin 1974, Rumelhart 1975, Schank & Abelson 1977). It is not surprising that the notion of schema is of extreme importance to language teaching as a discipline (Balboni 1999, p. 87) given that prediction, the cardinal step in comprehension, consists essentially of activating the right schemata (ibidem).

⁸ On the role of “analogous thought” in learning processes, see Eysenck and Keane (1990, p. 401). On the processing of current experience on the basis of preceding experience recorded in the brain in the form of small images based on psycho-physical experience, see Damasio (1994).

⁹ On the role of schemata and meaning in the processing and deep memorization of new input, see the studies by Bartlett (1932), Miller (1956), Bransford and Johnson (1972), Craik and Lockhart (1972), Slobin (1974), Rumelhart (1975, 1980), Schank and Abelson (1977), Rickheit and Strohner (1993). On the importance of analogies in the processing and memorization of new information, see Schank (1982), Eysenck and Keane (1990, p. 401).

Moreover, metaphor plays an important role in historical analysis of change in linguistic systems. It is one of the principal mechanisms underlying the multiplication of the uses and meaning of lexical items, enabling linguistic expressions to express meanings quite different from their “normal” use in language. As such, metaphors can be considered one of the most important communicative resources facilitating the potential use of given linguistic expressions for new communicative goals (Keller, Kirschbaum 2003). In this context, mention should be made of linguistic studies of *grammaticalization*¹⁰ (Lehmann 1982, Diewald 1997), which treat metaphor projection as a powerful tool for the innovative use of known grammatical and semantic forms and thus for extending the pragmatic field of language. Metaphors are seen as “necessary” within this framework, as essential instruments for the solution of cognitive and linguistic problems. According to grammaticalization experts (Heine, Claudi, Hünnemeyer 1991), the semantic domains involved in metaphorization processes are always cognitively based categories such as “space”¹¹ and “time”.¹² The “*Zeit ist wie Raum*” (‘time is like space’) metaphorical *mapping* for example is seen as one of the categorical metaphors which allow the expression of abstract concepts such as temporal relationships in more tangible terms such as space. Consider, for example, the extension of the use of the preposition “*vor*” (‘in front of’) from the spatial context “*vor dem Auto*” (‘in front of the car’) to the temporal one “*vor 19:00 Uhr*” (‘before seven o’clock’), where the temporal origin of the metaphor appears as a line that can be travelled along.¹³

The results of studies by the above-mentioned authors fully concur with both the localist hypothesis (“*Lokalismusthese*”)¹⁴ of centuries past and more recent research into cognitive semantics (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987, Langacker 1987, Sweetser 1990), which posits the existence of a strict analogy between the psychic and physical bases of experience in space and the development of language, especially the meaning of words.¹⁵

The central role attributed to spatial relations as unmarked categories capable of structuring numerous grammatical and semantic relationships is also in line with holistic approaches to first language acquisition (Clark H. 1973, Slobin 1985, Bowerman 1985, 1993, 1996, Mandler 1992, 1998, 2000). For this branch of psycho-linguistics, the domain of space and its conceptualization constitutes an essential premise for the development of grammar. Particularly noteworthy in this context is Mandler’s (1992) assertion that image

¹⁰ The word “grammaticalization” is used to describe phenomena which fall within linguistic mutation. Metaphors, for example, are one of the most important conceptual mechanisms cited in the study of the semantic mutation of language (Keller, Kirschbaum, 2003).

¹¹ Within Cognitive Grammar, “space” represents the basic category for the development of all meaning (Lakoff, Johnson 1980, Langacker 1987).

¹² Within Cognitive Grammar and in western linguistics in general, “time” is defined in spatial terms as a continuous linear axis joining past, present and future (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Wunderlich 1985, p. 80, Baldauf 1997, p. 148).

¹³ This coincides with research in the field of cognitive semantics (Lakoff, Johnson 1980, p. 41, Johnson 1987, p. 28) with regard to the PATH image schema and metaphors associated with TIME AS A ROUTE OR PATH. On the relationship between language and space in terms of temporal meaning, see also Dornseiff (1954, pp. 137-149), Wunderlich (1985), Baldauf (1997, p. 139).

¹⁴ A scientific current within 19th century theoretical linguistics which systematically sought the base forms of grammatical phenomena in order to describe them holistically. The localist hypothesis considered “space” as the basic category for the development of all meaning.

¹⁵ Note that according to cognitivist theories, metaphors are essentially “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff, Johnson 1980, p. 5); thus categories derived from spatial experience become the semantic vehicle par excellence for the definition of all other conceptual categories.

schemata – the existence of which is also suggested by cognitive theories of metaphor (Johnson 1987) – represent a kind of “primitive semantics”, in the non-traditional sense of the term, that the child develops in the exploration and comprehension of objects and situations in the pre-verbal phase and later successfully deploys to develop linguistic structures for more complex ideas. These image schemata thus form the semantic base and support for language as well as symbolic representation.¹⁶

From this perspective, linguistic comprehension and production take on greater dimensions, involving not only memorization of a text at a “superficial” level (concrete linguistic expressions, what is said) but also memorization at a conceptual level, which acts as the matrix of linguistic creation. The comprehension of idiomatic expressions does not only depend on their frequency in daily language, i.e. their level of conventionalization, but also on the presence of a kind of warehouse of metaphors in the minds of speakers (Glucksberg et al. 1982). According to Gibbs (1994), the contents of this warehouse are mainly conceptual metaphors and image schemata. The presence in our memories of these schemata and metaphors would explain why many linguistic expressions are understood easily without the aid of conscious reflection.

Although there is still ground to cover in psycho-linguistic research in terms of understanding whether and how speakers understand language through the activation of pre-existing conceptual metaphors, currently available data would seem to enable the first steps to be taken in the application of cognitive metaphors to the fields of pedagogy and teaching. It is useful to recall in this context that much research on foreign language teaching (Butzkamm 1989, O’Malley, Chamot 1990, Oxford 1990, Tönshoff 1998) concurs regarding the role played by the semantic motivation of linguistic expressions and conceptual reflection on language in helping students understand texts. Indeed, both the meaning transparency of the language and reflection on it facilitate the process (cited in chap. 1) of matching linguistic input and mental schemata which is at the basis of comprehension and learning. Thus, even though, as Glucksberg et al. (1992) and Gibbs (1992) argue, native speakers may not have conscious access to the conceptual metaphors present in a linguistic text, this does not mean that conscious activation of these metaphors cannot aid learners in the interpretation of idiomatic expressions in foreign languages which, unlike their mother tongue, have not yet become automatic.

Moreover, research into the use of metaphors in pedagogic contexts (Ortony 1975, 1979, 1993, Kövecses 1996, Boers, Demecheleer 1998) confirms their positive function in the memorization of teaching content. Their emotional force and figurative power provide a stimulus for mnemonic capacities (Ortony 1975, p. 45). This should also be seen in relation to the work of Paivio (1971, 1973, 1979, 1986) on the superiority of “pictorial” (visual) processing over verbal processing in the memorization of input. It is not surprising, as Hieber (1992, p. 196) recalls, that Paivio’s work has had such a significant influence on foreign language teaching, a discipline which has always used visual images both as a memorization technique and in the structuring of teaching content (Sperber 1989, Scherling, Schukall 1992).

The results of linguistic and psycho-linguistic studies raise questions for research regarding the importance of promoting “semiotic competence” in lessons alongside the development of linguistic competence. This means that teaching research must aim to provide learners with metaphorical models that allow them to intuit the real objectives of communication. Knowledge of the network of associations and analogies underlying

¹⁶ For a comment on the ideas of Mandler in relation to a reconsideration of the errors made by children in first language acquisition, see Bellavia (2007, pp. 200-201).

semantic relationships surely aids in the comprehension of texts of all genres on all levels. Possession of a rich set of conceptual and linguistic structural resources such as metaphor mapping means that learners become experts in symbolic scenarios, often seen as vital tools in textual interpretation and precise meta-linguistic strategies.

This study falls within the framework of this tendency, seeking to sustain and promote conscious processes of language acquisition in which meta-cognitive competence takes on a significant role. The chapters below will attempt to demonstrate how these objectives can be concretely achieved in lessons.

3. The meaning of “Facing a Difficult Situation”

According to cognitive theories of metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson: 1980), bodily experience in space is the basis of conceptualization in other domains. Many conceptual domains are structured metaphorically by means of a limited number of image schemata (Johnson 1987), which, as Casadei (1996, p. 109) succinctly puts it, are considered as kinds of “pre-linguistic cognitive structures” (ibid.), where the most salient forms of experiential knowledge are condensed into image form. We will now address what this means in concrete terms.

We will start by observing the following example:

- (2) *Das Pferd springt über den Zaun.*
‘The horse jumps over the hurdle.’

This sentence illustrates a situation where the object of the action described (“*das Pferd*”, ‘the horse’) jumps over the referred object (“*den Zaun*”, ‘the hurdle’). The latter is conceived as an obstacle which the *mover* goes beyond. In German, the preposition used to describe such spatial relationships is “*über*” (‘over’).

One of the typical metaphorical senses developed from the spatial meaning of “moving past an obstacle” is that of resolving problematic situations. Here are some idiomatic expressions originating from this metaphor:

- (3) *Wir sind mit den Schwierigkeiten noch nicht über den Berg.*
‘With these difficulties we are not yet past the mountain’.¹⁷
- (4) *Ihr wurde über die Anfangsschwierigkeiten hinweggeholfen.*
‘She was helped to get over the problem.’
- (5) *Der über den Skandal gestürzte Premierminister.*
‘The president fell because of the scandal.’
- (6) *Bis zum Mittagessen dauert es noch lange. Ich esse eine Kiwi: es wird mir über den Weg helfen.*
‘It’s a long time until lunch. I’ll eat a kiwi: it will help me on the way.’

Each of these examples deals with difficult experiences in the form of obstacles which block actions. In example (3) the difficulty is presented as a mountain yet to be climbed; example (4) shows a woman who has received external help to resolve initial problems; in example (5) the obstacle is a scandal causing the “fall” of a minister and (6), which is

¹⁷ In English: “We haven’t got over these problems yet.”

discussed above (see chap. 1, example 1), refers to the interval of time between now and lunchtime as a section of a route which is too long to be covered without help: the snack helps to reach the objective (lunch) without difficulties.¹⁸

The schema of the “obstacle” is frequent in German (Baldauf 1997) and is evident in many idiomatic expressions such as those in the following sentences (examples in German from Duden 1992, p. 790).¹⁹

- (7) “*einer Sache steht nichts im Wege*”
 ‘nothing is in (obstructs) the road of the thing’²⁰
- (8) “*jmdm. Hindernisse/Steine in den Weg legen*”
 ‘to put obstacles/stones in the road’²¹
- (9) “*Hindernisse aus dem Weg räumen*”
 ‘to remove obstacles from the road’²²

All of the examples cited above (see examples 3-9) are generated by the same image schemata (“PATH”, “BLOCKAGE” and “REMOVAL OF RESTRAINT”)²³ and the same metaphor (“LIFE AS A PATH OR JOURNEY”).²⁴ This is, as Casadei (1996, p. 170) also points out, “one of the most widespread and consolidated metaphors structuring our thought processes in relation to all events/actions”. The main components of this spatial metaphor are the *path* and *movement*. Even within this “symbolic scheme”, actions and events are paths, and for example, “the aiding or hindering of actions are helping hands or obstacles on a path” (ibid. 191), which is the metaphorical association at the origin of examples 3-9 above.²⁵

The obstacle metaphor is also active in the use of *über* (‘over’) as a verbal prefix in some compound words in German including:

- (10) a. *ein Hindernis überwinden*
 ‘to overcome an obstacle’
 b. *eine schwere Krankheit/Schwierigkeiten überwinden*
 ‘to get over a serious illness/overcome difficulties’
- (11) a. *einen Fluss, eine Schlucht überbrücken*

¹⁸ In this case the object perceived as an obstacle is not represented in accordance with a prototypical schema (a three-dimensional object such as the “mountain” in phrase 3) [see Brugman (1983), Hawkins (1984)], but is simply a path, a section of the road (normally schematized by a one- or two-dimensional horizontal figure). Thus what gives this phrase a sense of overcoming an obstacle is basically the emotional intention of the speaker, who, being extremely hungry, perceives the duration of time before lunch as a difficult “test”.

¹⁹ The choice of examples (7)-(9) – like all those used in this paper – has the sole purpose of exemplifying the linguistic phenomena under discussion. Thus the chosen examples reported here should not be understood as forming part of a linguistic corpus specifically aimed at demonstrating the phenomena being discussed, as these phenomena have already been demonstrated by previous research in the field of cognitive linguistics (for German, see for example Baldauf 1997).

²⁰ In the sense of something which can be resolved without difficulty.

²¹ In the sense of creating difficulties for someone.

²² In the sense of eliminating difficulties.

²³ See Johnson (1987, p. 28, 45 and 47 respectively).

²⁴ See Lakoff and Johnson (1980). In this paper we concur with the choice of Casadei (1996, p. 172) to use – with reference to the “LIFE IS A JOURNEY” metaphor – the term “PATH” in addition to the term “JOURNEY” as used by Lakoff and his followers.

²⁵ For a detailed analysis of such an image schema for German, see Baldauf (1997).

- ‘to get across a river/a gorge’
 b. *Gegensätze überbrücken*
 ‘overcome conflicts’
 (12) a. *Überbrückungsgeld*
 ‘money to get through hard times’
 b. *Überbrückungshilfe*
 ‘help to get through a difficult period’

In example 10a the *inseparable* compound verb “*überwinden*” (‘overcome’)²⁶ is used to describe the spatial situation of getting over an obstacle; the same verb is used in 10b in a metaphorical sense where a serious illness or difficulties are positively resolved.

The inseparable denominative verb “*überbrücken*” (‘to bridge’) (see example 11), behaves analogously and is derived from the image of the bridge (“*Brücke*”), which is the means used to cross the water courses blocking the path. In example 11a the obstacles to be overcome are a river and a gorge respectively and the same verb is used in example 11b in a metaphorical sense where the obstacles take the form of conflicts.

Lastly, example 12 contains two nominal metaphorical compounds where difficult situations are resolved thanks to acts of generosity (a sum of money to get through hard times and personal assistance in a moment of difficulty respectively)

A series of classroom tasks developed on the basis of the linguistic theories examined above will be the subject of the next chapter.

3. Some teaching proposals

3.0. *Premise*

The teaching methods put forward here have a philosophical and a practical dimension in relation to the theories underlying the approach and to the learning strategies and techniques presented respectively. A summary of the main elements of each is provided below.

The teaching principles underlying the tasks²⁷ presented in this chapter are largely based on the lexical approach (Lewis 1993, Serra Borneto 1998, pp. 227-247). They are summarized below.²⁸

- (i) Language consists of grammaticalized lexis and not lexicalized grammar and thus foreign language study must be based on lexis in significant contexts (Serra Borneto, *ibidem*).

²⁶ In German there is a well known phenomenon whereby several spatial prepositions can act as prefixes for the formation of compound words. Particularly numerous are cases of the formation of separable and inseparable compound verbs, which, like prepositional polysemy, students of German as a foreign language find particularly difficult to learn. On the possibility of studying compound verb polysemy analogously with the polysemy of the verbs’ respective prepositions, see Bellavia (2007).

²⁷ Within the framework of language teaching, activities focusing on manipulation rather than creativity are termed “exercises” while those concentrating on communication are “tasks” (Balboni, 1999, p. 39). The activities put forward here are more within the “task” camp as understood within language teaching (i.e. goal-oriented activities, *ibidem*, p. 18).

²⁸ For a greater understanding of the theoretical and technical assumptions as well as the teaching proposals, see Bellavia (2007, ch. 6).

- (ii) Words are not processed singularly but in clusters (*chunks*) with an overall meaning (ibidem). The teaching methodology and learning strategies should reflect this principle.
- (iii) Within learning processes, lexis and grammar are closely linked (the lexical approach uses the term “*lexico-grammar*” ibidem).²⁹

The specific teaching aspects include the following:

- (i) Students should be exposed to linguistically rich material (including daily usage, idiomatic expressions, metaphors etc.) so as to develop a “semantic sense” of the foreign language (ibidem).
- (ii) Learning is based on tasks, whereby students are encouraged to study the semantic characteristics of the foreign language in an active way. To these ends the development of the following skills are foregrounded: reflection on the language, linguistic awareness,³⁰ comprehension skills, and the ability to make hypotheses about language functions.³¹
- (iii) Teaching materials should be organized and presented in a manner which exploits the transparency of the language and the motivation of its meaning, thus reducing arbitrary usage (Meex, Mortelmans, 2002).
- (iv) Student curiosity, including its subjective and affective dimensions,³² should be stimulated.

The teaching strategies and techniques used in the creation of the tasks include the following:

- (i) The “cloze” technique (Balboni, 1999, p. 16), which by stimulating the mechanism of prediction (Balboni, 1999, p. 4) is used to develop and consolidate reflection and linguistic understanding, and facilitates a more holistic perception of the text by the students. This technique is found in tasks 3, 4a (Step 3) and 4b (guided cloze).
- (ii) Matching activities (word-definitions and word-pictures; ibidem, p. 1-2). This technique is found in tasks 1 and 4b (word-definitions) and task 2 (word -pictures).
- (iii) The “question” technique (ibidem, p. 32), focusing on inferential questions requiring the student to go beyond the literal meaning of a text to discover assumptions and implications³³ (ibidem, p. 53). This technique is found in all the tasks, specifically 4a and 4b.
- (iv) “Interlinguistic comparison” (Serra Borneto, 1998, p. 242), which is one of the mental operations of processing strategies (ibidem, p. 239). This is found in task 2.

²⁹ It should be noted that this point is close to the concept of grammar within Cognitive Linguistics, which posits a continuum between lexis and grammar (Langacker 1987).

³⁰ In this sense the spirit of the teaching proposals presented in this paper is similar to that of the *Language Awareness* movement which developed in the UK in the 1980s (Balboni 1999, pp. 21-22).

³¹ It should be noted that this capacity is linked to the language-learning mechanism of prediction (*Expectancy Grammar*, Balboni 1999, p. 41).

³² It is well known within language teaching that a consideration of the affective sphere constitutes one of the most important learning strategies (Serra Borneto, 1998).

³³ In this sense the activities meet some of the requirements of a “hermeneutic” approach in accordance with German language teaching principles (Balboni 1999, p. 38), which attribute a great deal of importance to text comprehension processes.

The tasks proposed are divided into two groups (see sub-chapters 3.1. and 3.2.), illustrating two different procedures for using metaphors in language teaching:

- a) The *semasiological procedure* (tasks 1, 2 and 3): this starts from the polysemy of a word (in this case “über”) and then studies its various extensions, drawing on the underlying image schemata and metaphors. This process moves from a concrete level of cognition to a more abstract conceptual level. In this sense it is analogous to the process defined within psychology as “*bottom-up*” (Eysenck, Keane 1990, p. 299).
- b) The *onomasiological procedure* (tasks 4a, 4b and 4c): this starts from a conceptual metaphor (in this case the metaphor of “LIFE AS A JOURNEY”), and works on several idiomatic expressions generated by this metaphorical matrix. It moves from an abstract level of cognition to a more tangible level. Here it is analogous to the process defined in psychology as “*top-down*” (ibidem).

It has been shown (ibidem) that the cognitive processing of words (written and spoken) involves the interaction of both processes (*bottom-up* and *top-down*). The teaching activities proposed here are based on this interactive model, helping students proceed inductively.³⁴

The tasks have been devised for formal classroom use. They are mainly aimed at advanced learners with a solid grammatical and lexical base who are interested in broadening their linguistic competence (for example students of linguistics, German studies, translation).

3.1. Compound Words

The first task focuses on the meaning of several compound words:

Task 1

The students are divided into two groups. Each group receives a paper with the following compound words:

Group A: *Übergangsgesellschaft (Kontext: Marxismus), Überbrückungsgeld.*

Group B: *Übergangszeit (Kontext: Frühling, Herbst), Überbrückungshilfe.*

Step 1: Match the compound words above with the following phrases:

a. *„Eine Zwischenphase oder –zeit, die als Etappe gesehen wird, um eine andere, stabilere Situation zu erreichen.“*

‘A transitional phase perceived as a stopping point on the way to a more stable situation’.

b. *„Etwas, das erlaubt, eine problematische Situation zu bewältigen, um weiter leben zu können.“*

‘Something which allows the resolution of a problematic situation and thus the continuation of life.’

³⁴ With regard to the decision to emphasise an inductive approach in language teaching, see Balboni 1999, p. 26.

Step 2: Identify the compound verbs from which these nouns have been derived and decide which verbs are separable and which are not.³⁵ Choose a compound word from among those analysed and imagine a situation in daily life which this word could refer to.

Step 3: Compare results in small groups of max. 4 (the groups should be mixed, i.e. 2 students from group A and 2 from group B)

Step 4: The results are discussed in a plenary group where the teacher explicitly returns to the rule governing separable and inseparable verbs with “über” (see note 35).

Task 1 concentrates on the semantic analysis of compound words which are used in a metaphorical sense: the meaning of the nominal compound “Überbrückung” (‘overbridge’) – derived from the *inseparable* verb “überbrücken” (‘to bridge’) – refers to the well known “obstacle metaphor” (see chap. 2, examples 11-12), and therefore matches the literal reading in *b* (see *Step 1*). The meaning of the nominal compound “Übergang” (‘passage’) – derived from the *separable* verb “übergehen” (‘to pass through’) – refers to the metaphor where a “CHANGE OF STATE IS A CHANGE OF PLACE” (to be more precise “to leave one place and enter another”),³⁶ and therefore matches the literal reading in *a* (see *Step 1*). Note that in German, separable compound verbs are frequently used in the expression of this sense, as in the phrase “das Rot geht allmählich in das Blau über” (‘Red gradually turns into blue’) (Bellavia 2007, pp. 135-138).

Task 1 gives students an opportunity to apply the rules they have learnt regarding separable and inseparable verbs in the interpretation of compounds (see *Step 2*, note 35). The variety of techniques (working individually, in pairs, in small groups, in plenary groups) leads to greater student motivation and lightens the cognitive load. Alternating more strictly intellectual work with activities based on emotional involvement (see *Step 2*) is also in line with current pedagogical research which identifies emotional intelligence as fundamental and more efficient (Greenspan 1997, p. 203). Class discussions mediated by opportune intervention by teachers (see *Steps 3* and *4*), facilitate a healthy critical attitude in learners and increase their meta-linguistic awareness in a “reasonably oriented” way.

We will now look at the second task proposed here.

Task 2

Step 1: Compare the following examples:

(1) *Endlich habe ich es überstanden!*

“I’ve finally overcome it!”

(1a) *Endlich habe ich es hinter mir!*

“I’ve finally got it behind me!”

³⁵ *Teacher’s note:* the students’ choice will be based on their knowledge of the rule regarding separable and inseparable verbs with “über” [Bellavia 1996, 2005, 2007, pp. 132-134, 138-139, 330-334].

³⁶ For more on the region of pertinence of the preposition *über* as a “container” having one border as an entry point and another as an exit point, see Bellavia (1996).

Step 2: Check the meaning of the phrases and try to paraphrase them. Imagine a situation in your life where you would say these words. Even if the meaning of the phrases is similar, the perspective is different. Can you describe the difference? Help yourself by drawing a picture!

Step 3: Are there similar expressions in your language to these German phrases (see examples 1, 1a)? Can you remember an experience in your own life where you said these words?

Step 4: Compare the example with the following phrase:

(1b) *Ich stehe vor einer sehr schwierigen Prüfung.*

“I have a tough test in front of me.”

What is the relationship between the prepositions “vor” (1b) and “hinter” (1a) in the metaphorical sense of the examples? What is the relationship between examples 1a and 1b and example 1? Can you find a common scenario for all these expressions?

The objective of Task 2 is to exploit the metaphorically based semantic analogies which weave languages together. The life experience at the basis of all three sentences (1 and 1a in *Step 1*, and 1b in *Step 4*) is a difficult test which has been passed (examples 1 and 1a) or that still has to be faced (example 1b). The “scenario” common to the three examples is the now familiar one of life (and more generally every action/event) as a journey, a sub-metaphor of which has difficult tests as obstacles on a path which require courage to overcome (see chap. 2).

The metaphor “LIFE IS A JOURNEY” is, by its very nature, linked to another well known metaphor which sees time as a long pathway along the axis of movement, with the future in front of us and the past behind us (some German idiomatic expressions relative to this metaphor include “*einen Tag vor seiner Prüfung*” (‘a day before his exam’), “*Arbeit hinter sich bringen*” (‘finish the job’, lit.: ‘get a job behind oneself’). It is this metaphor which regulates the sense of the prepositions “*hinter*” (‘behind’) and “*vor*” (‘in front of’) in examples 1a and 1b, respectively: in 1a the difficult situation which has been resolved now belongs to the past (the speaker has put it behind them), while in 1b the speaker is still facing the difficulty.

The application of knowledge regarding the underlying image schemata and metaphors of a language facilitates the study of foreign words not as separate units but within the network of their conceptual relationships (grouped together in *chunks* within a coherent system in line with recent research on the organization and memorization of the mental lexicon).³⁷ Adequate consideration of the metaphorical quality of language opens up new possibilities in foreign language teaching by exploiting its intrinsic potential as a coherently structured system. Until recently, a great deal of vocabulary, including idiomatic expressions, was considered to be highly resistant to organization and structure. However, as we have seen, language lexis is motivated and can be studied within an ordered system which has its roots in our psycho-physical apparatus. Thus, one of the

³⁷ The mental lexicon is where lexical information of various kinds is connected and processed (Scherfer 1995, p. 165, Schwarz, Chur 2001, p. 17). For more on the concept of the mental lexicon, see Börner and Vogel (1994), Müller (1994), Aitchison (1997), Beißner (2002).

objectives of language teaching should be to heighten student awareness regarding systematic relationships within the target language in order to facilitate comprehension and memorization of linguistic data. Indeed, all research on memory and the mental lexicon confirms that information is memorized better if it is linked in terms of sense, for example by analogy or similarity (see Kleinschroth 1994).

A useful technique which teachers can deploy alongside explanations of the meaning of linguistic metaphors is that of *visualization*. We have already made reference (see chap. 1) to the superiority of visual processing over verbal processing in the memorization of input and the fact that foreign language teaching makes extensive use of pictures as mnemonic aids.³⁸ We would like to present here an image which could be used in the classroom alongside the study of the metaphorical uses of the sentences discussed in task 2:

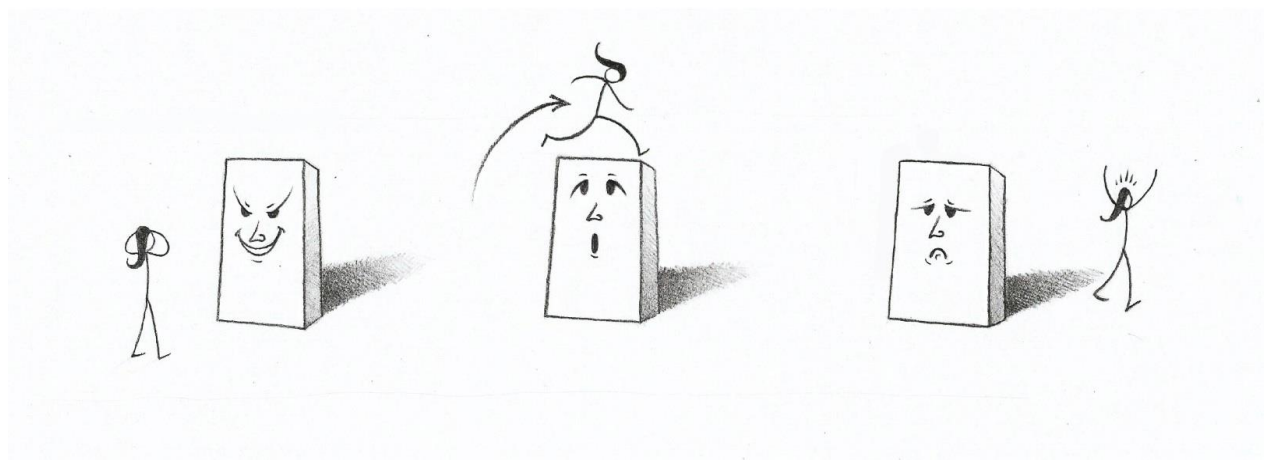


Figure 1. “Facing a difficult situation”

The three pictures in Figure 1 (from left to right: *a*, *b* and *c*) are connected in a kind of micro-sequential narrative: in picture *a* (referring to sentence 1b in task 2), the small human figure is facing a terrifying object (a symbol of the difficult test ahead), in picture *b* the figure has found the courage to overcome the test [the verbs used to express this situation are compounds with “über” such as the inseparable verbs “überstehen” (‘overtake’) and “überwinden” (‘overcome’)], and in picture *c*, the figure is beyond the “monster” (referring to sentences 1 and 1a of task 2). The “tryptic” visualization allows students to study the metaphorical meanings of the different prepositions (“über” in the function of prefix, “hinter” and “vor”) within the same “symbolic mini-story” (in our example, illustrating the situation of facing obstacles on the path of life).³⁹

To broaden the symbolic context of the “comic strip” shown in Figure 1, the teacher could add another picture such as that below:

³⁸ For further discussion of visualization in the study of foreign lexis, see Sperber (1989), Scherling and Schukall (1992), Heidemann (1996).

³⁹ In relation to the idea of “mini-scripts” for the representation of the meaning of prepositions and their possible use as mnemonics, see Bellavia (2007, pp. 110-111, 299-310).

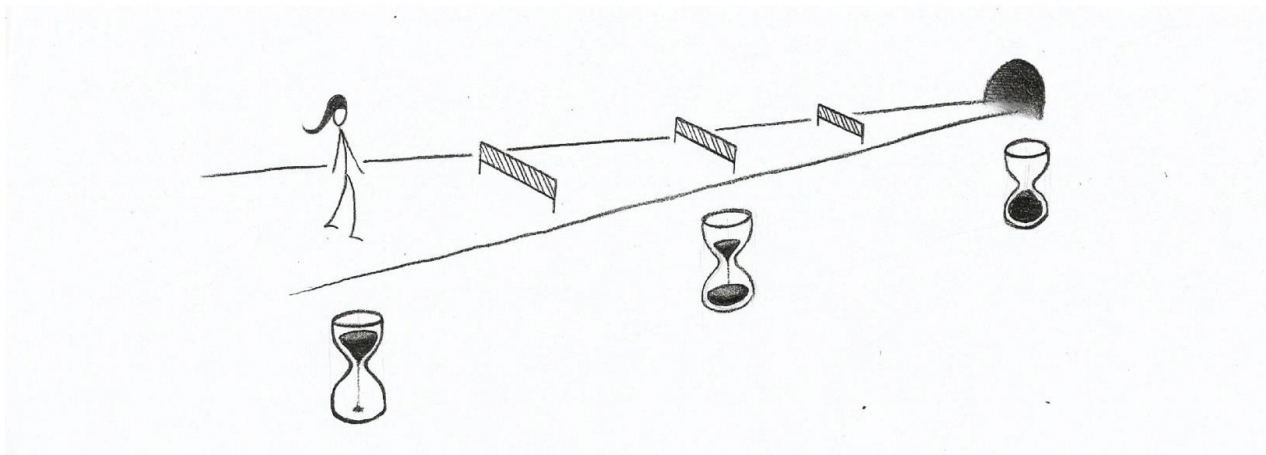


Figure 2. "Life is a Journey (with Obstacles)"

The picture suggests that the action of overcoming the obstacle illustrated in Figure 1 is only one of many such actions undertaken in the path of life (where we are faced with many trials). This visualization technique allows learners to become familiar with the metaphorical model of "LIFE AS A JOURNEY" and with the "subordinate" metaphor of the "ACTION/EVENT AS A SEGMENT OF THE JOURNEY". In this way students are introduced to the different levels into which metaphors are sub-divided⁴⁰. This approach is also extremely convenient because it shows the generalizing character of metaphors and image schemata: the same metaphor ("LIFE AS A JOURNEY") and the same image schemata ("PATH", "BLOCKAGE" and "REMOVAL OF RESTRAINT") can be applied to recurring situations that are perceived as analogous. In this way students learn a limited number of schemata and metaphors which however can be applied to an almost infinite number of "linguistic combinations" (idiomatic expressions).

The extreme simplicity of the images in Figures 1 and 2) makes decodification immediate and helps memorization⁴¹. The humorous inferences regarding the emotions of the *mover* (see the body language of the woman in Figure 1) and of the obstacle (see the facial expressions of the "monster" in Figure 1) all lighten the learning process, making it more enjoyable as well as facilitating the memorization of verbal input.⁴²

We will now present the task involving metaphorical compound verbs with "über":

⁴⁰ On the question of the interdependence of metaphorical sub-domains, see Lakoff & Turner (1989, p. 81). These authors speak of metaphors placed at a "generic level" (for example "EVENTS ARE ACTIONS") and at a "specific level" (for example "LIFE IS A JOURNEY", "LOVE IS A JOURNEY" etc.). For more on this question, see Casadei (1996, p. 172) and the excellent discussion by Baldauf (1997, pp. 245-268).

⁴¹ On this point, see Heidemann (1996).

⁴² Studies within Applied Cognitive Linguistics which seek to combine the principles of Cognitive Grammar with an adequate representation in teaching materials for German using sequences of images include Scheller (2009) and Suárez Muñoz (2013).

Task 3

A friend is complaining about her work hours. She works from 9 until 13 and then from 16 until 20. As she lives a considerable distance from her job, it is not worth going home during the break, but she does not know how to fill in the time. She expresses the problem in the phrase below:

„Ich weiß nicht, wie ich die Zeit kann.“
 ‘I don’t know how the time.’

Step 1: Choose one of the following verbs to fill in the blank space: “übernehmen”, “überspielen”, “überbrücken”, “überfallen”. Explain your choice.

Step 2: What advice would you give your friend?

The task centres on the idiomatic expression “*eine Zeitspanne überbrücken*” (‘overcome a timeslot’), which uses the metaphor of time as a path, in which the time interval considered (lunch break) is seen as an obstacle to overcome.

3.2. The metaphor of “LIFE AS A JOURNEY”

The last series of tasks presented below (see 4a, 4b, 4c) also exploits the correspondence between the domain of life and that of a journey or path. Although the task is divided into 3 sub-sections (all with the same metaphorical matrix), each task is complete in itself and can be used individually.

Task 4a:

Schritt 1: Alte Leute werden oft als Menschen gesehen, die “am Ende ihres Weges angekommen sind”. Was wird in diesem Satz mit “Weg” gemeint?

‘Step 1: Elderly people are often seen as having “come to the end of the road”. What is meant here by the term “road”?’

Schritt 2: Ein Mann befindet sich in einer problematischen Situation und sagt, dass er “nicht weiterkommt” und deshalb möchte er dem Leben “eine neue Richtung geben”. Was meint er damit?

‘Step 2: A man is in a problematic situation and says that he “can’t go on” and therefore that he wants his life to take a “new direction”. What exactly does he mean?’

Schritt 3: Komposita wie “Lebenslauf”, “Lebensweg”, “Lebenspfad”, “Lebensreise” sind linguistische Erscheinungen der konzeptuellen Metapher “LEBEN ALS”?

‘Step 3: Compounds such as “curriculum vitae” [lit. “life course”], “life path”, “career path”, “life’s journey” are all linguistic manifestations of the conceptual metaphor “LIFE AS”?’

In task 4a – where the instructions are intentionally in German – students are asked to reflect on the meaning of several idiomatic expressions regarding the metaphor of “LIFE AS A JOURNEY/PATH” (where possible the plenary discussion should be in both languages: in German and the mother tongue).

In *Step 1* students are asked to find a literal synonym for the word “path” (“Weg”): in this way they are easily able to intuit the two terms of the metaphor [the original domain (path) and the target domain (life)]. Students will also learn the idiomatic expression (“*am*

Ende des Weges ankommen”), and also practice the genitive (“*am Ende des Weges, des Lebens ankommen*”).

In *Step 2* of the task students compare the meanings of several idiomatic expressions used in daily conversation – in relation to the metaphors of “LIFE AS A JOURNEY/PATH” and “ACTION/EVENT AS A SEGMENT OF THE JOURNEY”. The first expression (“*nicht weiterkommen*”) can be traced to the metaphor “NOT TO PROGRESS IS TO REMAIN STATIONARY/STAY STILL” (this is a metaphor derived from the more well known one: “TO PROGRESS IS TO GO AHEAD/ADVANCE ALONG A PATH”),⁴³ the second expression (“*eine neue Richtung geben*”) can be traced to the metaphor: “TO CHANGE A MODE OF ACTION IS TO CHANGE DIRECTION”. Other examples that can be traced to this metaphor are the German metaphorical compounds “*Neuorientierung*” (‘new direction’), “*Kurswechsel*” (‘change of direction’), “*Umorientierung*” (‘reorientation’), “*Kehrtwende*” (‘about turn’), all of which are frequently used in political discourse.⁴⁴

In *Step 3* of the task, students are shown several compounds which can be traced to the metaphor “LIFE IS A JOURNEY/PATH”, and are asked to insert the original domain of the metaphor. This task allows students to gain familiarity with the existence of the conceptual metaphorical level, which is superior to the linguistic level of actual idiomatic expressions. This facilitates easier memorization – now and in the future – of the various idiomatic expressions associated with the conceptual metaphor.

Let us now look at the following task:

Task 4b:

Fill in the blank spaces by choosing from the eight expressions below:

- a) Die lebende Person ist.....
- b) Die Geburt ist der Ausgangspunkt
- c) Das bisher gelebte Leben entspricht der zurückgelegten
- d) Lebensziele sind
- e) Die Mittel, die zum Erreichen der Lebensziele eingesetzt werden, sind
- f) Schwierigkeiten im Leben sind
- g) Menschen, die Ratschläge geben, sind
- h) Entscheidungen im Leben sind

1: Hindernisse auf der Reise – 2: Weggabelungen – 3: der Reise – 4: Führer – 5: Wegstrecke – 6: der Reisende – 7: die Wege auf der Reise – 8: Reiseziele.

In task 4b students must insert the correct answer into the blank spaces (the correct answers are: a/6 – b/3 – c/5 – d/8 – e/7 – f/1 – g/4 – h/2). This task allows students to practice working with a wide range of vocabulary in context. It also provides an opportunity for further study of similar correspondences with the “mother-metaphor” LIFE IS A JOURNEY, which gives rise to various sub-metaphors that are the origin of multiple idiomatic expressions [it should be noted in this context that the f/1 pairing can be

⁴³ Other idiomatic expressions in German which can be traced to this metaphor are: “*mit einer Arbeit gut vorankommen*” (‘make good progress with a job’), “*die Arbeit geht gut voran.*” (‘the job is going ahead well.’), “*im Leben vorwärtskommen*” (‘to get ahead in life’). On this metaphor in German, see Baldauf (1997, pp. 139-150), Bellavia (1997, 2007, pp. 354-360).

⁴⁴ On this metaphor in German see Baldauf (1997, p. 142).

traced to the obstacle metaphor seen above with regard to the polysemy of “über” (see ch. 2)].

Now we will look at the last task:

Task 4c:

For each idiomatic expression (1-6), find the correct “literal” interpretation (a-f):⁴⁵

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) “eigene Wege gehen” | a) “auf neue, noch nicht erprobte Weise handeln” |
| 2) “viele Wege führen nach Rom” | b) “jmd. hat viele gute Möglichkeiten für seine Zukunft” |
| 3) “jmdm. stehen alle Wege offen” | c) “etwas ist [ohne Probleme] möglich” |
| 4) “neue Wege gehen” | d) “es gibt mehrere Möglichkeiten, ein Ziel zu erreichen” |
| 5) “einer Sache steht nichts im Weg[e]” | e) “nicht fertig werden” |
| 6) “auf halbem Weg[e] steckenbleiben” | f) “selbstständig, unabhängig handeln” |

In task 4c students are asked to match the idiomatic expressions (1-6) with the relative paraphrases (a-f) (the correct answers are: 1/f; 2/d; 3/b; 4/a; 5/c; 6/e). The idiomatic expressions all refer to the metaphor of “ACTION/EVENT AS PATH”. Example 5 refers to the obstacle metaphor discussed above (see chap. 2 and task 4b, point f), in which difficulties are obstacles along the path (in this case nothing is standing in the way of achieving the objective: the path is clear). In contrast, idiomatic expressions 1, 2, 3, 4 can be traced to the metaphor of “POSSIBLE ROUTES ALONG THE JOURNEY ARE POSSIBLE WAYS OF ACTING/RESPONDING” (a metaphor which students have already encountered in task 4b, point e). Idiomatic expression 6 refers to the metaphor of “TO PROGRESS IS TO ADVANCE ALONG A PATH/NOT TO PROGRESS IS TO REMAIN STATIONARY/STAY STILL” (students have already encountered this analogy in task 4a, step 2).

The tasks presented here give students the opportunity to practice a number of idiomatic expressions and words. Moreover, this is supported by both affective and conceptual motivation due to the presentation of the words and idiomatic expressions within a holistic system (the “LIFE IS A JOURNEY” metaphor), with its personal connotations (the theme of life involves everyone) rather than, as often occurs, in isolation in a list.⁴⁶

4. Conclusions

The objective of this paper was to demonstrate several possible ways of integrating metaphors into foreign language study, particularly the study of German. The central idea underlying the proposed tasks is that target language vocabulary should be presented to learners within a “symbolic network”. In this way, various lexical uses are understood in context and in relation to each other, rather than in isolation. This provides support for

⁴⁵ All the examples shown (1-6, a-e) are from Duden (1992, pp. 786-789).

⁴⁶ For a critique of ways in which lexical polysemy is treated in contemporary language teaching textbooks, see Bellavia (2007, pp. 249-291).

learners in the gradual construction of their own mental lexicon, in accordance with the structure of the mental lexicon of a native speaker.

One of the reasons why the metaphorical nature of everyday language has only recently been taken up within the teaching of German as a foreign language is because recognition of this aspect of language is a recent development in German cognitive linguistics and much remains to be done. The development of teaching techniques and materials must be accompanied by class trials and tests and subsequently modified and improved. The main objective at this stage is the creation of a “Cognitive *Lexico-Grammar*” for German, to serve as the main defining theoretical linguistic framework for the development of appropriate teaching materials.

A *contrastive* approach is also fundamental in the development of a *Pedagogic Grammar*, given the importance of intra-linguistic comparison between mother tongue and foreign language in learning strategies (Serra Borneto 1998, p. 242). Indeed, a pedagogic grammar for foreign language learning should be inherently contrastive (Meex, Mortelmans, 2002, p. 49).

I would like to offer a final consideration by way of conclusion. I am aware that many teachers and students may not appreciate the highly cognitive nature of the tasks proposed. It is, indeed, an approach which is more suited to teachers and learners who enjoy reflecting on language and its deep meanings. However, I am also certain that many teachers will be interested in these new proposals, perhaps adapting them to their own individual styles of teaching and needs. All teachers are thus urged to use these tasks in a flexible manner. The important thing, as always, is having the courage to try something new.

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