Conceptual Fluency in Theory and Practice

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the influence of Conceptual Fluency Theory within the framework of successful FL acquisition;

a case study carried out at NBU;

some ideas how to foster an interest in mastering conceptual fluency.
Metaphor

- a rhetorical device of saying something as if it were something else;
- an ornament in literary works;
- an indispensable function in the human cognition – association by similarity;
Examples

Black widow
ladybugs/ladyclock/lady cow/fly

Tiger’s Eye
“the average speaker of English invents approximately 3000 metaphors per week”

Pollio, Barlow, Fine & Pollio, Figurative Language in Psychology, Psychotherapy, and Education (1977)
“Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.”

Lakoff and Johnson, Metaphors We Live By (1980)
Graphic representation

Conceptual metaphor

Metaphorical expressions

MORE IS UP
LESS IS DOWN
Universal conceptual metaphors

English, Hungarian, Polish, Chinese, Zulu

[HAPPINESS IS UP] to feel up

[HAPPINESS IS LIGHT] to radiate joy

[HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER] to be filled with joy

[ANGER IS A GAS IN A CONTAINER] to boil with anger

[LIFE IS A JOURNEY] to be at a crossroads

Foreign Language Acquisition

Verbal Fluency – “the ability to control surface structure”

Conceptual Fluency – “the ability to interconnect this level with its underlying conceptual structure”

Marcel Danesi, Semiotics in Language Education (2000)
Problem

Students “speak” a FL using its formal structures but “think” in terms of heir NL conceptual system.
A case study

Approx. intermediate level (B1)

- Compositions
- Short answers to questions
Only people who earn a lot of money are successful
Appearances are deceiving
Hope and fear are inseparable
Sometimes ambition is a false friend
Few wishes come true by themselves
Little knowledge is a dangerous thing
What is love?
What is hope?
What is fear?
How important is intelligence for you?
How important is money for you?
How important are words for you?
Use of Resources

- BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English
- Roget Thesaurus Dictionary of English Words and phrases
- Monolingual dictionaries

http://dictionary.cambridge.org/
http://www.ldoceonline.com/
Compositions

Topics – concepts
Ex. Appearance (looks)

to make, put in an appearance

a dishevelled; immaculate, neat; shabby; unkempt, untidy appearance

good looks

air, aspect, attitude, bearing, blind, carriage, cast, character, condition, countenance, demeanor, dress, expression, face, fashion, feature, figure, form, front, guise, image, look, looks, manner, mannerism, mien, mode, outline, pose, presence, presentation, screen, semblance, shape, stamp;

disappearance, disappearing
Appearances are deceiving

- to uncover the true self
- to make people acknowledge smb. as smth. ingenuine as smb's fake manners are
- control the temper
- to present oneself in an appropriate light for the given situation
- to be taken for an absolutely different kind of person
- to win smb's approval or attention
- We want to be smth that we are not meant to be
- cheating hurts people
- With a different outfit everyone could look different.
- false make-up
- People are judged by their clothes
- material condition
- to hide who I really am/my emotions
- change the instincts
Types of mistakes

Vocabulary
“to broadcast an advert”; “to watch commercials and adverts”

Synonyms
“to obey a temptation”, “to meet a temptation”
“to subdue to one’s fears” (subdue excitement/passions; suppress fear)
Types of mistakes

Typical of NL conceptual system

“to prove oneself in society”, ”mistakes build our character”, “to keep success”, “material condition”, “change the instincts”, “wide knowledge”, “smth. is happening without our knowledge”, “to give the maximum of one’s possibilities”, “words said on time and place they should be said”, “fight to make the wishes come true”
Answers to Questions

List of conceptual metaphors:

The electronic corpus of George Lakoff
http://cogsci.berkeley.edu/lakoff/

Love

[LOVE IS A BOND] a strong bond between them
[LOVE IS A UNITY] X is my better half
[AFFECTION IS CLOSENESS] X is close to Y
[EMOTIONAL INTIMACY IS PHYSICAL CLOSENESS] made for each other; to be one; my other/better half; a perfect match

[LOVE IS A JOURNEY] at a crossroads in their relationship; this relationship isn't going anywhere; in a dead-end relationship; relationships, like sharks, have to keep moving to stay alive; this marriage is on the rocks; this relationship has been spinning its wheels for years; their marriage has really gone off the track.

[LOVE IS MAGIC] the magic is gone; s/he is bewitching; enchanted; to be entranced; to be charmed
Expressions Used

“Love opens our hearts” - open your heart to love

“Love makes us better”; “Love has many forms”

“Love is magic”
Possible solutions

to show how FL “reflects” or encodes concepts on the basis of metaphorical reasoning;

to recognize the verbal expressions and to pay attention to their underlying conceptual metaphors;

to encourage Ss to produce/invent metaphoric expressions;
“Showing” how metaphors work

Please discuss in which other areas of life the following phrases associated with sports are used. Think of your own examples.

- His argument was completely off base.
- Life is not a spectator sport.
- The election campaign was a close race.
- Candidates had to play it safe to gain the support of the public.
Similarities and Differences

- A friend in need is a friend indeed
- Too many cooks spoil the broth
- "To cucumber grower – cucumbers, I’m not from yesterday"
Idiomsatic expressions

[ANGER IS FIRE]

- Smoke was coming out of his ears.
- He is smoldering with anger.
- She was fuming.
- Hey, I’m burned up!
Life is a Journey
Money

Prosperity Savings Plan

How have your savings grown?
Grow your money with regular savings
MONEY DOESN'T GROW ON TREES
Encouraging creativity

BUILD YOUR ENGLISH

Exam preparation levels

Adult Levels

Senior Levels

Junior Levels
Thank you for your attention!

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