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Raising Metaphor Awareness in English for Law Enforcement

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Abstract

Metaphor awareness is an asset for the ESP teacher, although it is not usually present in the second language curriculum. The discourse of technical expert groups in the field of crime is saturated with metaphor. In the Police Training Centre located in Avila, metaphor awareness raising activities are successfully included in the police ESP syllabus as a language learning strategy. Students in the second course of the Executive Scale of the Spanish National Police (CEFR B1) receive input in conceptual metaphors related to drugs, offences and offenders, police officers and equipment, and penalties and penitentiaries. This enables them to understand in context new specialized terms, enhances L2 vocabulary retention, and improves motivation, learner's autonomy, and intercultural competence. Metaphors are entitled to find their way into any law enforcers' foreign language teaching curriculum.

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1. Theoretical background

Semino (2008: 1) defines metaphor as "the phenomenon whereby we talk and, potentially, think about something in terms of something else." Metaphor awareness is a pedagogical asset for the ESP teacher, although it is not usually present in the second language curriculum (Doiz and Elizari 2013). It has been widely studied, mainly in advertising, though it may prove equally useful for practitioners in other ESP areas, such as Science (Roldán-Riejos and Úbeda Mansilla 2013) or Business English (Herrera-Soler and White 2012).

The Cognitive Metaphor Theory was developed within the field of cognitive linguistics following ideas expressed in the well-known book *Metaphors We Live By*, by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980). They claimed much more than the traditional purely aesthetic function for metaphors and suggested that human thought is metaphorical and that we would be unable to think and act without suitable metaphoric structures. According to this theory, metaphor involves two elements: the topic or tenor and the vehicle (Bailey 2003; Littlemore and Low 2006). In other words, a metaphor consists of a target or recipient domain (an abstract concept, located in higher cortical areas; the semantic field under discussion) and a source or donor domain (a concrete concept, located in the sensory-motor system; the semantic field used to understand the target). Interconnections between these two domains, belonging to different superordinate domains, are established by analogical mappings. Metaphoric thinking maintains "double vision" and enriches the object by holding it simultaneously in two points of view (Manning 2012).

The use of metaphor in English for Law Enforcement extends "double vision" and includes the avoidance of direct references to embarrassing, distressing or taboo subjects. As a result, the technical lexicon associated with crime is saturated with a metaphoric language that has a tendency, especially in police-related environments, to a slang that names things indirectly or figuratively (Mattiello 2008).

Recognizing and contributing to metaphorical networks is a necessary skill for second language learning (Littlemore and Low 2006). Unprompted ESP students use metaphors in their area of speciality in a rather intuitive way, and training in this aspect makes them more knowledgeable about the specific language of their discourse community (Roldán-Riejos and Úbeda Mansilla 2013). Being unaware of the metaphoricity of language may involve falling into the trap of conceptual transfer from one language to another (Juchem and Krennmayr 2010).

While "simple" or "primary" metaphors are potentially universal, as they are based on universal human experiences (Kövecses 2005), complex conceptual metaphors that emerge from the primary metaphors are greatly influenced by culture, and are very apt starting points for introducing intercultural competence in the ESP classroom. Indeed, it is this link between language and the culture that requires understanding of the ways in which metaphors are able to function within the specific culture and / or sub-culture of crime and punishment in the target language studied in the classroom.

2. Teaching metaphor in English for law

While it seems clear that ESP Students at the Police Training Centre really do benefit from becoming familiar with conceptual metaphors common in English for law enforcement, the question remains, what is the best way to familiarize these ESP Students with metaphoric language? Lack of time is an obstacle, for English lessons take up two hours in the students' weekly schedule.

ESL lessons in metaphor take place in the second year of the Executive Scale of the Spanish National Police Corps (Common European Framework of Reference level B1). This is specifically the promotion course for sub-inspectors. Students are divided into two sections of twenty students each.

Metaphoric awareness raising activities are included in the syllabus, following a Presentation-Practice-Production sequence in a first class period, which is continued the next day:

1. The students think of examples of Spanish metaphors connected to the police function according to their own experience as police officers (*barrer del mapa*, *tener el mono*, *pisar los talones*, etc.) and explain to the rest of the group in what contexts they used them.

2. Students are then paired up and each pair studies a series of short English texts written in a slang containing metaphorical expressions whose meaning is not apparent at first glance. They try to infer possible meanings of those expressions, bearing in mind the concept of metaphor. Knowledge of conceptual metaphors enhances conceptual

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