Agnieszka UBERMAN

METAPHORICAL EXTENSIONS OF THE SEWING FRAME IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Introduction

Apart from being expressed in an open and straightforward fashion, a significant number of concepts are veiled (thinly or otherwise) under the guise of a metaphor. Metaphors have the potential to express meanings by referring to a different conceptual domain. Since language is universally considered a vehicle of thought, whether straightforward or metaphorical means are used, meanings are conveyed more or less succinctly. The present discussion will focus on outlining the nature of metaphors in language. Moreover, suggestions relating to the classroom application of metaphorical language will be briefly introduced preceded by the presentation of the frame of sewing. Due to the limitations of space and the necessity of keeping this paper within manageable limits and proportions, specific questions pertaining to the issue of introducing metaphorical language to learners will only be outlined. Undeniably, the methodology of introducing metaphoric language deserves an individual study and detailed discussion, beyond the scope of the present paper.

The nature of metaphor

While discussing metaphors in language and thought, Lakoff and Johnson (1980:23) note: Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish – a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. However, based upon

existing research data the authors[1] notice that 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 (see Lakoff and Johnson 1980:3).

Broadly understood figurative language is present in everyday communication. Even though it is thought of as being associated primarily with literary language, much of daily language use is metaphorical. Metaphor is a tool so ordinary that we use it unconsciously and automatically, with so little effort that we hardly notice it (see Lakoff and Turner 1989:xi). Hence, it is evident that it is a natural component of the human communication system, referred to and defined as linguistic image based on a relationship of similarity between two objects or concepts; that is, based on the same or similar semantic features, a denotational transfer occurs, e.g. The clouds are crying for It's raining (see Bussmann 1996:304).[2]

Expert literature refers to metaphorical expressions as a manifestation of conceptual metaphors, which bring two distant domains (or concepts) into correspondence with each other. One of the domains is typically more physical or concrete than the other (which is thus more abstract). The correspondence is established for the purpose of understanding the more abstract in terms of the more concrete (see Kövecses 2000:4).

Similarly, McArthur (1992) specifies the very fundamental nature of metaphor as a figure of speech which concisely compares two objects in terms of one another, thus bringing together lexical items and imagery characteristics of various fields. For example, in the sentence Achilles was a lion in the fight, a warrior is compared to and described as a lion owing to the fact that both warriors and lions share bravery and strength, and so the warrior is a lion among men and the lion is a warrior among beasts (McArthur 1992:653).

Thornbury (2006:130) points out that some researchers either believe entirely or suggest that the fundamental roots of language are figurative rather than literal. Moreover, the researcher believes that cognitive metaphors organise the way language users perceive and think about the world.[3] The examples that the author enumerates additionally contribute to such understanding of the phenomenon under consideration. In consequence, in sentences I look forward to hearing from you or Picasso was ahead of his time; the items forward and ahead

---

[1] Cf.: *[...] there is a growing body of evidence that metaphor is a pervasive, irreducible, imaginative structure of human understanding that influences the nature of meaning and constraints our rational inferences* (Johnson 1987:xii).

[2] The underlines, which are aimed at highlighting examples provided by the author, are not originally included in the quoted publication.

[3] Similarly, Lakoff and Turner (1989) stress that metaphor is a principal, key tool language users possess for understanding both the world and themselves.

allow language users to construe time as if the future represented in the examples was physically in front of the speaker.

This simple definition of conceptual metaphor is opposed by Turner (1987:16–17) who appears to disagree, stating:

[…] when two things share salient properties, one can be used as a metaphor for the other in order to evoke our recognition of some of those shared properties. Metaphor is thus defined as an expression of similarity. And the definition presupposes that the relevant properties that are shared and that constitute the similarity are already embodied in our conceptual representations. Metaphors, on this view, do not impose structure on our concepts; they merely rely on previous structure and do no more than highlight, filter, or select aspects of that given structure.

Evidently, the author believes that when this observation is articulated, it is itself just a representation of one of the many possible basic metaphors. Thus, metaphors are ways of seeing, i.e. understanding, one conceptual domain in terms of another; such a definition being an embodiment of a conceptual metaphor itself: UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING, with cognition and vision as instances of different yet related domains of experience.

Kövecses (2002) draws on the example of a well-rooted metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY[4] to characterise the notion of conceptual metaphors, understood as the rendering of one conceptual domain in terms of the other. In his own words, *A convenient shorthand way of capturing this view of metaphor is the following: CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN (A) IS CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN (B), which is what is called a "conceptual metaphor"* (see Kövecses 2002:4). Hence, conceptual domains – constituting the above-described type of metaphor – are interpreted as any coherently organised experience. The domain from which metaphorical expressions are drawn is referred to as the source domain, while the domain to which those expressions are applied – in order to allow one to interpret and understand the metaphor in terms of the source domain – is known as the target domain. Hence, in the above-quoted example *life* may be qualified as the target domain while *journey* represents the source domain.

It seems appropriate for the present discussion to briefly address the general types of conceptual metaphors. Kövecses (2002) distinguishes three main kinds of conceptual metaphors, i.e. structural, ontological and orientational.[5]

Structural metaphors are viewed as those in which the source domain (i.e. the conceptual domain from which metaphorical expressions are drawn for another (target) conceptual domain to be understood) supplies a reasonably

_____

[4] Examples quoted by Kövecses (2002) include the following: "He's *without direction* in life"; "I'm *where* I *want to be* in life"; "I'm *at a crossroads* in my life"; "She'll *go places* in life", etc.

[5] A detailed discussion is offered by Kövecses (2002:33–36). Compare: Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

extended *knowledge structure for the target structure*. Structural metaphors are aimed at increasing a language user's comprehension of the target by means of the structure of the source. The following examples illustrate this point more clearly: Her claims are *indefensible*; I managed to *attack all weak points* in his line of argumentation.

Ontological metaphors are metaphors in which an abstraction (i.e. an activity, emotion, an idea, etc.) is represented as something concrete such as an object, substance, container, or person. Hence, language users are able to visualize their experiences in terms of objects, substances and containers in general, without a thorough specification of the kind of object, substance or container, e.g. He *puts* a lot of energy *into* anything he does; How did she *get out of* writing the report?

Kövecses (2002) notes that ontological metaphors enable language users to perceive more particular, *sharply delineated structure where there is very little or none*. The author also believes that personification can be interpreted as a type of ontological metaphor and concludes in the words: *in personifying nonhumans as humans, we can begin to understand them a little better* (2002:35).

Orientational metaphors *provide even less conceptual structure for target concepts than ontological ones. Their cognitive job, instead, is to make a set of target concepts coherent in our conceptual system* (Kövecses 2002:35). In this kind of metaphor concepts are spatially related to one another (up - down, in - out, back - front, etc.), e.g. I'm feeling *down*; She *fell* into *depression*. The clear interpretation of the above-quoted examples is that the upward orientation refers to the positive assessment, while the negative evaluation is expressed in terms of the downward orientation. Similarly, *centre, front, whole*, are generally considered positive, with their antonyms at the opposite end of the positive-negative spectrum.

While specifying the nature of metaphors, Kövecses (2002) stresses that they can be rooted in both knowledge and image, not just the fundamental knowledge of concepts; conceptual metaphors can be based on knowledge and image simultaneously. These metaphors are universally referred to as **image-schema metaphors** (Kövecses 2002) in which the conceptual elements of image-schemas are mapped from a source onto a target domain. Such metaphors map relatively little from the source to the target; moreover their source domains have skeletal image-schemas and are not restricted merely to spatial relations. Kövecses (2002:37) describes this phenomenon in the following manner:

There are many other "schemas" that play a role in our understanding of the world. These basic image-schemas derive from our interactions with the world: we explore physical objects by contact with them; we experience ourselves and other objects as containers with other objects in them or outside of them; we move around the world; we

experience physical forces affecting us; and we also try to resist these forces, such as when we walk against the wind.

Interactions of this type are frequent in human experience and they are responsible for forming image-schemas, which systematise many non-figurative concepts metaphorically. Interestingly enough, other concepts can also be rendered in such a way. [6]

Taylor (1989:134–135) stresses that a considerable number of experience themes are metaphorically structured through a restricted number of image schemas. Thus, image schemas of various kinds structure a range of abstract concepts metaphorically.

The issue we shall address in the following segment is the core of conceptual metaphors. Specialists seem to agree that most metaphors are inherently complex. Kövecses (2002:5–10) lists the following component elements or aspects:

a. source domain;

b. target domain (the source domain is usually of a more physical nature while the target domain tends to be more abstract);

c. experiential basis (domains are motivated by some embodied experience);

d. neutral structures equivalent to both domains in the brain;

e. relationships between the source and target;

f. metaphorical linguistic expressions;

g. mappings (basic and essential, conceptual correspondences between domains[7]);

h. entailments (additional mappings made onto the target domain beyond basic correspondences);

i. blends (combination of conceptual material new with respect to both domains);

j. non-linguistic realisations (metaphors are materialised by means other than language thought; also in social and physical reality and practice);

k. cultural models.

The preceding analysis is far from being exhaustive owing to the fact that the subject of the present discussion is an extensive area of research. As a result, only a brief outline of pertinent issues addressing metaphor in language teaching has been provided. Now we shall turn our attention to the practical applications

---

[6] See, for instance, Uberman (2006:210) for an exemplification of image-schematic representation of a Polish proverb.

[7] Kövecses (2002:6–7) provides the following example of mappings within the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY: travellers → lovers; vehicle → love relationship; destination → purpose of the relationship; distance covered → progress made in the relationship; obstacles along the way → difficulties encountered in the relationship.

of this theory in classroom settings. The exemplification shall be based on the elements of the frame of sewing, which will be presented in the following subsection.

The frame of sewing[8]

The frame of sewing is a complex cognitive structure that incorporates specific tools (understood as something that is specifically made to perform a particular action) as well as materials.

Sewing is a process or activity of joining two pieces of cloth or leather, etc. (MATERIAL) by means of *thread* (MATERIAL) that is driven by a *needle* (TOOL). Sewing is performed by a *seamstress*, *dressmaker* or a *tailor*, the first being a woman whose occupation is sewing, the second refers to a person making women's clothes to order, whereas the latter is preoccupied with making or altering clothes, and is predominantly male.

The tools necessary for the process of sewing primarily include a *needle*, which is absolutely essential for sewing to take place. A *needle* is a small thin object made of metal with a sharp point at one and a hole at the other end. The hole is referred to as *needle eye* or *the eye of a needle*.[9] There are various types of needles, such as *sewing needle, darning needle*, both used to drive thread through a small opening in cloth in order to join two pieces of material or mend a hole. Other types of needle include *knitting needles* and *crochet* used in *needlework*,[10] which in fact are a part of a different frame and shall not be discussed further here.

In the process of sewing, a needle is only able to perform its function with the presence of *thread*. *Thread* is a kind of thin string, made of cotton or silk, etc. that is driven by a needle to form *stitches*.[11] *Stitches* are created by

---

[8] A more extensive description of the frame is offered in Uberman (2006).

[9] In Polish the term is 'ucho igielne' and it can be noticed that two distinct organs of the human body (face to be exact), i.e. eye and ear are the target of metaphorisation, due to shape resemblance and as kinds of 'openings'.

[10] "*Needlework*, a term applied to two classes of handcraft involving fabrics. The first, embroidery, is the embellishment of a fabric by designs worked in thread with a needle. The second includes methods of forming a single thread or strand of threads into a loose- or tight-textured fabric. The best known of these methods are knitting and crochet; such methods are distinguished from lace making, which is an elaborate form of plaiting and braiding" (*Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia* 1999:346).

[11] *Stitch* is a lexeme of a polysemous nature and has references beyond the frame of sewing as [MAKING A GARMENT]. It is understood to denote "a piece of special *thread* which has been used to sew the edges of a wound together, e.g. He had to have 10 stitches in

144

individual portions of thread that have been placed in cloth, fabric or material of any sort by means of a needle. As noted above, both needle and thread are essential for sewing. In order to accomplish that, however, the thread has to be placed in the needle eye and passed through it, i.e. the *needle* needs to be *threaded*[12] (~ to thread a needle).

When performing the task of sewing an article of clothing, whoever performs the activity goes through a stage at which the pieces of cloth are temporarily put together to see whether everything fits or if any alterations need to be applied. Those pieces of fabric can be provisionally put together by *basting* or by means of *pins*. A *pin* is a small artifact that resembles a needle in that it is a short thin piece of metal with a sharp point at one end. However, it has no eye to put thread through it instead of which there is a rounded end. It is used especially for fastening together pieces of cloth while making clothes.

Prototypically, the frame of sewing is primarily associated with making garments. Obviously enough, any artifact made of cloth, fabric of whatever kind (e.g. curtains, linen, etc.) comes into being only as the result of sewing. Once one is engaged in the making of a garment, curtains, linen, etc., they would not always be able to complete the sewing by hand, therefore another artifact is used, i.e. a *sewing machine*. It is a kind of machine that is used for sewing, with a needle that is driven by an electric motor or by movement of hand or foot. A sewing machine is fitted with a needle which has to be threaded just like an ordinary sewing needle. The purpose of using a sewing machine is twofold. It is supposed to make the job of a dressmaker or a tailor easier and faster, but also *seams* are supposed to be even and unobtrusive. Once two pieces of fabric, cloth or material are joined together by means of a thread, a *seam* is produced.

Sewing is an activity that may be employed to close an opening or hole in the cloth or garment, or in the production of a garment from a large piece of *fabric, cloth, material*.[13] In order to produce an item of clothing, once the *pattern* (a shape used as a guide for making something, esp. a thin piece of paper used when cutting material to make clothes – *LDCE* p. 1207) has been selected, a *tailor* or *dressmaker* needs to *cut out* the desired shape with the use of *scissors* (a cutting tool with two joined blades – *LHLD* p. 356), fasten the pieces together by

---

his head", and *to stitch somebody up* means to "put stitches in a wound in order to fasten parts of it together" (*LDCE* 2003:1632).

[12] One can easily observe that the verb 'thread' has been produced as the result of the process of conversion of the noun 'thread'. Its Polish equivalent does not display the same property, for there is a particular verb (*nawlekać*) that corresponds to the meaning of the verb *to thread*.

[13] It is interesting to note that the English lexical item 'material' can be used in the sense of 'fabric' but definitely it is not its primary sense, whereas its Polish counterpart 'materiał' is often used as a cover term for different types of cloth, thus a typical case of hyperonymy with 'materiał' as a superordinate term and 'bawełna' (cotton), 'jedwab' (silk), 'satyna' (sateen), etc. as co-hyponyms.

means of *pins* or *baste*, i.e. sew the pieces together provisionally so that changes can be made when the item of clothing is *tried on* (put on {a garment, etc.} to see if it fits or looks good – *LHLD* p. 443). Afterwards, such items of clothing as coat, jacket, skirt, trousers, waistcoat, etc. are provided with *lining*, i.e. a coat (jacket, etc.) is fitted with another piece of material covering the inside of it; in other words the item of clothing in question is *lined with* a piece of fabric on the inside. On approving of the size during the *fitting* (i.e. occasion of trying whether cloths fit – *LHLD* p. 143) and making the necessary alterations or adjustments to get the perfect fit, the material can be sewn together to form the actual *garment*, i.e. article of clothing (*LHLD* p. 157).

Metaphorical extensions of selected elements of the sewing frame

The English language abounds with idiomatic expressions of various nature, therefore only selected instances shall be illustrated in the present paper.

Needle is a small, thin object. In case it is dropped on to the floor or carpet, its size and shape make it difficult to find. Such properties of a needle, when considered from the semantic point of view, render an expression *look for a needle in the haystack* (*The Collins Cobuild Dictionary of English Idioms* p. 272) which implies that it is exceptionally difficult or even impossible to find something and any attempt to do so seems ineffective. Similarly, if thread is considered one can easily realise that it is not very durable or strong enough to hold a heavy object. An expression *to hang by a thread* suggests that something is likely to fail. Used with reference to peoples' life, the expression also means that the life of the person in question is not expected to last much longer and so they are very likely to die, or face some form of mortal peril (*The Collins Cobuild Dictionary of English Idioms* p. 388).

The lexeme *needle* is found in other idiomatic expressions. When someone is described as being *as sharp as a needle* they are meant to be intelligent, quick-witted and perceptive. When someone *gets the needle* (informal British English) they become angry, whereas *to be on the needle* is a colloquial American English expression referring to drug abuse. In the slang of gambling (or sport in general), *needle* means to insult another player in order to interrupt his line of thinking (Dalzell 1998:75).

Another element of the sewing frame enumerated in the foregoing discussion is a *pin*. This lexeme is present in a number of expressions in English. In spoken language, *you could hear a pin drop* (*LCDE* 2003:1239) is an expression referring to a situation when it is very quiet and no one is speaking. A pin is a small, thin and light object which produces a noise which is inaudible to the human ear when dropped to the ground. It is evident why this lexical phrase resorts to an image of a pin dropping to highlight the notion of silence.

An expression referring to two elements of the sewing frame is *pins and needles* (or *to get pins and needles*) which describes "an uncontrollable feeling, often in your foot or leg, which you get especially when you have not moved part of your body for a long time, and the supply of blood has stopped flowing properly" (*LDCE* 2003:1239), comparable to the feeling experienced when pins are being pressed against the skin. The phrase *to be on pins and needles*, though structured in a similar manner, indicates a distinct phenomenon. It is used mainly in American English to represent an occasion of being anxious and unable to relax, particularly while awaiting something important. A Polish translation equivalent of the phrase: *być jak na szpilkach*,[14] refers to the same element of the frame, i.e. *pins*, however, no reference is made to *needles*.

If you *pin someone down* (*BDPF* 2001:913), the person is compelled to reveal their intentions or to state their views. The *pin* seems to be the element that holds the person in a position which makes it impossible for them to move or act the way they would wish to, in exactly the same way as the pieces of cloth that are pinned in order to restrict their freedom of movement. The pin is the instrument used for fastening fabric. Similarly, the use of pin in the expression *to pin something on a person* means that blame, guilt or responsibility is fastened onto them.

An idiomatic expression *in stitches* (*English Idioms* p. 93) designates someone who is laughing uncontrollably, e.g.: '*Ask Peter to tell you his joke about the woman with the poodle. He'll have you in stitches*'. In an attempt to trace the possible origin of such a phrase, one might try to envisage a person laughing so much that they start to 'fall apart' and stitches need to be used to keep them in one piece. Hence, the expression *have / keep somebody in stitches* means "to make someone laugh" (*LDCE* 2003:1632). Another informal expression pertaining to this ingredient of the sewing frame is *not have a stitch on* which means "to be wearing no clothes". The notion was adopted in the story for children written by H. Ch. Andersen entitled *The Emperor's New Clothes*. The Emperor was so vain that he wanted to look his best and constantly requested fashionable, new clothing. Once a couple of lazy men promised the Emperor they would sew clothes for him out of a special cloth, which apparently could not be seen by foolish people. They managed to persuade the Emperor to believe them and so they deceived the vain monarch. As he was walking through the street in clothes made of cloth that was not there, he did *not have a stitch on*.

The interpretation of the idiom *to sew something up* (*English Idioms* p. 143) is far less intricate. This expression is used while talking of settling arrangements, completing a deal, contract, etc. The process is compared to

---

[14] *Słownik frazeologiczny współczesnej polszczyzny* (2002:812) additionally lists the phrase *siedzieć jak na szpilkach* which refers to the situation as outlined above.

sewing up pieces of material in order to produce a comfortable piece of clothing.

While interpreting the meaning of the phrase *to thread one's way through something* we tend to imagine a tight passage, as if of the eye of a needle, a place with hardly any space for someone to move through effortlessly. Such an interpretation mirrors the meaning of the expression, defined as "moving through a place by carefully going around things that are blocking your way" (*LDCE* p. 1505).[15]

Let us consider another reference to *thread*. The sentence "*It's difficult to pick up the threads when you've been travelling for so long*" exemplifies the use of the phrase *to pick up the threads* which can be defined as "to begin something again after a long period, especially a relationship or way of life" (*LDCE* p. 1505).

While sewing, the thread can become tangled and knots might be formed along. When they do come about they tend to slow down the whole process, as time needs to be devoted to untie the thread in order to get rid of knots. When a situation is described as *a knotty problem* (*English Idioms* p. 70) the sewing frame is automatically activated. Knots are unwelcome but sometimes inescapable. Hence, it seems apparent that the phrase *a knotty problem* indicates a problem that is complicated and hard to solve. As such, the phrase seems to pertain to the ancient problem of *the Gordian Knot*.

Certain expressions can be understood only with reference to the cultural background of a language community. An instance of this type is represented by the phrase *sewing/quilting etc. bee* (*LDCE* 2003:120) which is an informal expression functioning in American English to describe an occasion when people, usually women, meet in order to do a particular type of work.

A number of expressions have been used in languages in the form of adages. A proverb, as defined by *The New Lexicon Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language* (1988:804), is "a brief familiar maxim of folk wisdom, usually compressed in form, often involving a bold image and frequently a jingle that catches the memory."

With the implementation of a range of simple notions and elements, proverbs convey certain truths pertinent to human life. *A stitch in time saves nine* (*Leksykon przysłów angielskich* p. 49; *The Penguin Dictionary of Proverbs* p. 71) (a stitch in crocheting or knitting) indicates that swift reaction to a small problem, i.e. an attempt to solve a troublesome situation when it is still within manageable proportions, can save a lot of trouble later on. It also seems to imply that neglecting a small detail may result in its accumulation or amounting to

---

[15] It is translated into Polish as *lawirować wśród czegoś, omijać coś* (such as obstacles), *przeciskać się przez coś* (such as, for example, a crowd).

much greater difficulty afterwards. In other words, it is worthwhile to take prompt action in order to avoid future trouble.

Another example that could be quoted is an English proverb *cut your coat according to your cloth*. Both the English proverb and its Polish equivalent (*Tak krawiec kraje, jak materii staje* (*Mała księga przysłów polskich* 1994:96)) seem to imply the necessity to limit the scope of one's ambitions in accordance with the resources one possesses (*Leksykon przysłów angielskich* p. 19; *The Penguin Dictionary of Proverbs* p. 226). Tailors or dressmakers are supposed to produce garments which are aimed at making the customer look elegant, comfortable and good. This assumption takes on proverbial properties as well. *Clothes do not make the man* implies that only the outside appearance can be modified or improved. Moreover, clothes neither reflect a person's character nor represent their qualities. The Polish version of the same proverb, i.e. *Nie szata zdobi człowieka* appears to designate identical interpretation.

Another reference to sewing, both figurative and literal, is present in the proverb *Don't stitch your seam before you've tacked it* (*The Penguin Dictionary of Proverbs* p.118), which appears to be a piece of advice against haste and recklessness. It is always better to check whether something is properly planned, arranged or whether it works accurately before finalising a task or before it assumes its final shape. The same is true of actual sewing. The tailor or dressmaker always bastes the pieces of cloth together first to prepare the garment for sewing up and trying while fitting, to see if there is a need for improvement or any changes to be made. Applying changes and alterations to a complete project is hardly ever desirable and, additionally, it takes time which could be spent otherwise in a more efficient way.

The Penguin Dictionary of Proverbs (1983:12) lists the proverb *He who holds the thread holds the ball* to describe one of the advantages of authority. It could be compared to a Polish saying (as quoted in *Słownik symboli* 1990:251): *skupiać, trzymać mieć (wszystkie) nici czegoś (w ręku)*, an expression that originated in weaving terminology, which is interpreted as to have control over the situation, know all its details and be in charge. Both of the described phrases refer to *thread*, which symbolises the connection between an individual (one's hand taken to stand for authority) and the matter to be dealt with all its various aspects.

Thread appears to be of great symbolic nature. According to *Słownik symboli* (1990) it symbolises existence, life, love, umbilical cord, offspring, fate or destiny. Moreover, it is taken to stand for the axis of the world, ray, sublimation, ascent and nothingness. Apart form these notions, *thread* is the symbol of memory, intelligence, the way to cognition, relationship, story, dreams, friendship, danger, intrigue, talkativeness as well as escape.

Thread, among other things, stands for relationship, binding force, something that joins various states of existence to one another. It also symbolises life, fate and destiny. In Greek mythology there were three fates or goddesses of

fate/destiny, the so called Moerae or Moirai, one of whom was responsible for spinning the thread of human life (Clotho), the other for watching and protecting it as well as measuring its length (Lachesis), and the third for cutting it when death comes (Atropos).[16] In plastic arts those three goddesses are depicted as serious matrons holding distaff, scales and scissors respectively.

One of the most prominent examples of daily life reference to mythology is rendered by the expression *the thread of Ariadne*. According to Greek mythology, the goddess presented Theseus with a ball of thread to help him find his way back and get out of the labyrinth.[17] It can hence be understood to symbolise escape, but also cognitive abilities, intelligence and a way of finding things out. This mythological story gave rise to a proverb *Dojść po nitce do kłębka – to follow the thread to the (bitter) end*, which implies the ability to find out, explain something by means of revealing or getting to know the consecutive elements as if of a puzzle, by following a given trace or drawing conclusions.

Obviously, this discussion only touches upon the possible word combinations with particular elements of the frame in question. It has to be pointed out that a great number of existing collocations have not been enumerated due to the length restrictions.

Classroom applications

Metaphorical extensions of lexical items frequently cause a considerable difficulty as far as classroom application is concerned. The choice of whether to introduce them or not depends on a combination of factors including the students' age, level of proficiency and prior language experience to name but a few. While presenting the information to language learners it is advisable to refer to various meanings that can be represented by an individual lexeme or phrase. Obviously, such information can only be appreciated and comprehended by more advanced language learners and hence, should be addressed to students beyond the intermediate level of language proficiency.

As lexical units, metaphors develop and expand a students' lexical store and can be processed in the language classroom according to the standards of vocabulary teaching.[18] Obviously enough, some metaphorical linguistic

---

[16] "The Roman Fates were the Parcae – Nona, Decuma, and Morta. In Norse mythology, the three Norns wove the web of life" (www.encyclopedia.com).

[17] Ariadne was a Cretan princess who loved Theseus, and "gave him the skein of thread that enabled him to make his way out of the labyrinth after killing the Minotaur" (www.encyclopedia.com).

[18] A detailed discussion can be found in Hrehovčik and Uberman (2003) as well as Uberman (2006).

expressions are more complex in nature and would cause comprehension difficulties for language learners therefore they would obviously not be engaged in non-advanced classrooms. The teacher needs to spell out the salient differences between the English and Polish meaning, thus contributing to language, and frequently cultural, awareness being raised. Advanced learners are very likely to profit from a clear explanation highlighting particular points of reference and meaning. In is important to point out the differences in various forms such as:

*The opening in the needle: (E) needle **eye** – (P) **ucho** igielne,*
*To place thread in the needle: (E) to **thread** the needle – (P) **nawlekać** igłę,*
*To hold something in position: (E) to **pin** sth down – (P) **przygwoździć**,*
*To blame someone for something: (E) to **pin** sth on sb – (P) **zrzucać, zwalać** winę na kogoś.*

The above are just exemplary illustrations of the divergences between the images evoked in the contrasted languages. In case of the last pair of phrases the notion of attaching something to someone else is expressed in English, whereas in Polish the image of dropping something (of considerable weight) on someone else to relieve onself of the burden is clearly indicated.

Obviously enough, many expressions are equivalent in Polish and English, hence problems are likely to be scarce in the process of teaching respective forms.

Some simple activities can be devised to identify possible meanings of polysemous items, such as for instance identifying the correct references

Which of the following is not the meaning of *needle*:

a) provoke or tease,

b) prick, pierce or stitch with a small, slender, sharp-pointed implement,

c) increase the alcoholic content of a beverage,

d) be in need.

In an online article Lazar[19] states that metaphors provide a practical, handy and memorable manner of organising the lexical items to be taught in the process of language instruction. Not only can lexemes be arranged into lexical sets according to topic area[20] but also metaphorical thematic sets can be suggested. The following sequence of seemingly straightforward steps in the process of sewing (the script of [SEWING A GARMENT]) can be the springboard for discussion of metaphorical meanings of particular lexemes:[21]

a) selecting a pattern and tracing it onto a piece of cloth / fabric,

---

[19] www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/methodology/metaphor.shtml.
[20] See for instance Kleparski (2002).
[21] Compare: metaphorical extensions of body parts, the case of face in Uberman (2008).

b) cutting a desired shape out of a piece of cloth / fabric,

c) threading the needle,

d) pinning or basting the pieces of cloth together by hand,

e) trying on a pre-sewn garment,

f) marking and making alterations to be applied to the piece of clothing,

g) lining the garment (if required),

h) sewing the garment up / together {using a needle or, nowadays, a sewing machine},

i) sewing buttons onto the garment, {which is an optional step, for not every single item of clothing requires buttons},

j) ironing the article of clothing to be worn.

Concluding remarks

Experienced teachers are always ready to make up a classroom activity that is inspiring and engaging for learners. Metaphorical language, even though noted for difficulty, is undeniably fascinating enough to create thrill and joy of language experience that is far beyond literal meaning and language use.

Metaphorical language can be noted in individual items as well as word combinations. Some form elements of proverbs and idioms, while others are building blocks of collocations and fixed expressions. The suggestions provided above supply the merest hint at possible classroom adaptations and applications.

Contemporary teachers have at their disposal a wide array of techniques and tools for language teaching, including vocabulary presentation and practice tasks. Proper selection and task adaptation testify to the teacher's expertise and flexibility. Undeniably, there are no pre-prepared patterns for teaching (a sewing metaphor itself). However, language instructors have to be able to make a skillful mixture of accessible materials to produce a 'garment' that is tailor made for the specific needs of the individual student.

References

Dictionaries and Encyclopaedias

Bąba, S. & J. Liberek 2002. *Słownik frazeologiczny współczesnej polszczyzny*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Bussmann, H. 1996. *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*. London: Routledge.

Cayne, B.S. (ed.) 1988. *The New Lexicon Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language*, Canadian Edition. New York: Lexicon Publications, Inc.

Costa, M., S. Crowdy & F. McIntosh (eds) 1988. *Longman Handy Learner's Dictionary*. Harlow: Longman.

Dalzell, T. 1998. *The Slang of Sin*. Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

Dickey, N.H. & L.L. Bram (eds) 1999. *Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*, USA: Funk & Wagnalls Corporation.

Domański, P. 1993. *Leksykon przysłów angielskich*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Petra.

Fergusson, R. 1983. *The Penguin Dictionary of Proverbs*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Gulland, D.M. and D. Hinds-Howell 1986. *The Penguin Dictionary of English Idioms*. London: Penguin Books, Ltd.

Kopaliński, W. 1990. *Słownik symboli*. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna.

McArthur, T. (ed.) 1992. *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nyczaj, S. (ed.) 1994. *Mała księga przysłów polskich*. Radom: Oficyna Wydawnicza STON.

Room, A. 2001. *Brewster's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable.* London: Cassel & Co.

Seidl, J. & W. McMordie 1978, 1988. *English Idioms*, Fifth Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sinclair, J. (ed.) 1990. *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*. London & Glasgow: Collins.

Sinclair, J. (ed.) 1995. *The Collins Cobuild Dictionary of English Idioms*. London: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.

Summers, D. et al. 2003. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, The Living Dictionary*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Thornbury, S. 2006. *An A-Z of ELT*. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers, Ltd.

Other works

Hrehovčik, T. and **A. Uberman** 2003. *English Language Teaching Methodology: An Undergraduate Course for ELT Trainees*. Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego.

Johnson, M. 1987. *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Kövecses, Z. 2002. *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction. Oxford*: Oxford University Press.

Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Taylor, J. R. 1989. *Linguistic Categorisation: Prototypes in Linguistic Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Uberman, A. 2006. *Modelling the English Lexicon in Applied Linguistics*. Rzeszow: Wydawnictwo UR.

Uberman, A. 2008. "Some remarks on the application of metaphors in the *EFL* classroom" [in:] G.A. Kleparski and A. Uberman *Galicia Studies in Language, Literature and Culture*. Chełm: Wydawnictwo TAWA, pp. 73–79.