

## Part 6

### Key Directions and Characteristics of Research Organization in Contemporary World

### Ключевые направления и особенности проведения научных исследований в современном мире

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#### METAPHORS IN THE PRESS: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WORKING WITH NEWSPAPER TROPES TO IMPROVE FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

##### **Abstract**

The given article intends to focus on some approaches to teaching English as a second language at an advanced or proficient level. The paper primarily deals with the ways in which stylistic aspect of newspaper language can be put to use by university students thus becoming an integral part of their classroom discourse. The study aims at presenting newspaper metaphors as cognitive units of the language which, in its turn, allows one to consider them cultural items as they often have realia behind them. Newspaper language, sensitive to any fact of daily life vastly use metaphors, and given that it seems evident that by mastering newspaper metaphors adult learners dramatically increase their chances of becoming competent language users.

##### **Introduction**

As teachers and scholars grow to understand how much the special language media as well as different types of discourse matter in language learning and communication they come to see that stylistic aspect of the language may become an integral and invaluable part of teaching English to advanced adult learners especially to university students of linguistics or those majoring in pedagogy (MDE, 2004). Despite some theorists claims that the stylistics of a language should be studied only in connection with selective courses or that it must be confined solely to the postgraduate studies, we strongly believe that integrating stylistic analysis into everyday language learning activities will only contribute to a more effective foreign language acquisition. Thus any limited approach to the place of stylistics in the

English curriculum can no longer be fully accepted. We also tend to agree with McIntyre who considers the teaching of stylistics in further and higher education arguing that “for students to get the most from stylistics, it needs to be taught alongside core methodological principles from linguistics” (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2011; Jeffries, 2009). Given that and relying on the existing achievements in the field (Cameron, 2003), we think it possible to assume that by focusing more on stylistic analysis of news and feature newspaper articles’ discourse university students can not only get an insight into how English works but master the techniques of non-literary texts analysis and interpretation, work out the mechanisms and strategies of compositional discourse patterns which in its turn will undoubtedly contribute to achieving excellence in English. University students of linguistics master a foreign language more conscientiously when analyzing it from stylistic perspective, starting with the whole text and then proceeding to the study of each detail within it. A student sees each part of the text, each line and word in context. And as the student becomes more sophisticated this knowledge becomes more sharply contrasted with naïve or purely participatory reaction.

### **Stylistic aspect of metaphors in newspaper discourse**

The necessity to highlight the practical application of stylistic analysis of non-literary discourse, namely that of newspapers and consequently, educating students of linguistics into this useful habit is predetermined by a number of reasons. As newspaper texts are widely available either in printed or on-line form, it is strongly recommended that teachers in the classroom should take every opportunity in encouraging their students to analyze the way various expressive means of the language are set to work in different texts, approaching the former not as purely decorative means but as those language units which can also help to succeed in what is called “a cross cultural communication”. Thus tropes, such as metaphor can be of great help in shedding new light on the aspects of language which could previously seem vague and obscure to an untrained eye, of no more use than ornamental language units. It follows from the above mentioned that advanced learners of English must be encouraged to see that not only fiction writers but also newspaper journalists resort to figurative language in order to convey concepts originally developed by and addressed to a different audience (Di Bari & Gouthier, 2004).

Unfortunately it is not an uncommon situation when working with university students of English at Moscow State Linguistic University, the author of the study finds that they are eager to identify tropes and analyze their significance in all kinds of literary texts but are quite unwilling to do so when it comes to newspaper discourse. Newspaper texts are traditionally approached and treated by both teachers and students as ample sources of clichés and hackneyed speech patterns and the former consider them useful only in terms of the factual information they can give a student. The stylistic aspect of newspaper discourse is often disregarded and a search for tropes as well as their further analysis is often neglected, presumably as having very little practical use. There seem to be at least three (and in fact there are many more) comprehensive explanations for the problem: one is that students of English as a target language may have poor knowledge of the system of tropes existing in the language, another is that they are unaware of the possibilities that newspaper tropes offer in terms of language learning and what is more they do not

see that by mastering newspaper tropes, metaphors in particular, they reduce the chances for cross-cultural miscommunication which is often the case “when a person of one culture”, i.e. a native English-speaking journalist or reporter, sends a message using figurative language to “a person of another culture” i.e. a student of English (Adler, 1991).

Such close attention to the stylistic means of newspaper language is preconditioned by a number of reasons. First, it is the assumption that newspaper discourse is abundant in the data of versatile character which allows individuals to confront us not only with facts but also with an extensive range of stereotypes, norms and values which may seem unfamiliar or even alien to a person of another culture. Second, it is in newspaper texts and namely in feature articles that we observe subjective evaluation domineering over factual component or emotions taking over phenomena that seem rational. Objective reality is interpreted in newspaper discourse along two lines: explicitly through plain facts as well as implicitly through various language means among which such tropes as metaphor, based on imagery and interplay of meanings, are prevalent. Newspapers are known to react instantly to any daily event and with other types of mass media winning over the targeted addressee, newspapers are becoming increasingly competitive in presenting their opinion. (Richardson, 2006) As sources of metaphors are man and his pursuits, nature, history and mythology they become indispensable in representing all fields of man activity with a marked bias towards those concerning political, economic and social issues (Rodriguez Marquez, 2010).

## Discussion

The author of the given paper believes that working out a number of classroom strategies one may try to bridge the gap between a fear of tropes and their effective decoding in newspaper texts which will eventually turn stylistic analysis of language means into an attractive challenge. First, it is highly recommended to focus students' attention on newspaper metaphors as, genuine and trite, they stand out conspicuously in the texts catching the students' eye. Thus, assisted by the teacher, they become aware of the fact that metaphors are the products of two-fold perception and not a displacement of words but the natural outcome of thought achieved by comparison. It is always a result of some creative process at the background of the text as a whole. What is more, the students start to see that in case of metaphor we get a fusion of things that are brought together. The degree of fusion may be different and it depends very much on the syntactical function of metaphor. Second, the author suggests that at this stage teachers should not only get their students into the linguistic nature and properties of metaphor, but work out activities that will allow the students to see the way metaphors work in newspaper texts primarily as tools serving the purpose of encoding the message produced by the sender. Decoding, in its turn, may require some mental effort on their part, as metaphors are complex cognitive units (Semino, 2008; Wikberg, 2004). It is also believed that a number of theories of metaphor such as those worked out by Lakoff & Johnson (1980) or Turner (1991) can be of help for those teachers determined to motivate their students into decoding newspaper metaphors, as according to the given views of Lakoff & Johnson (1980), metaphors can help us define and construct the reality “as the concept is metaphorically structured, the activity is

metaphorically structured, and, consequently, the language is metaphorically structured”.

Classroom activities for students can be arranged starting from the simplest tasks and then gradually increasing the level of difficulty which can be suggested next to each activity heading. (Harmer, 1991) The teacher prepares examples of metaphors, borrowed from a number of quality newspaper texts, referring to man’s activity as well as samples of metaphors which often personify political and economic reality. The students are encouraged to analyze and interpret these metaphors and do some follow-up activities which include spotting and highlighting metaphors in newspaper articles and headlines on their own as the teacher controls feedback giving the clues if needed. For example, the students can be offered a headline:

School Budget Cuts: Careers Advice, Music and Art among First Casualties (The Guardian, 2010)

The follow-up activities may read as follows:

1. Look at the following headline and elicit a metaphor. Say to which spheres of human activity (war, games, competition, sports, etc.) it may refer to? What makes you think so? Can you guess the content of the article judging from its headline?

If the students experience any difficulty in decoding the idea behind the metaphor in the headline, the teacher should provide them with the context to form the background for a better understanding.

After the students familiarize themselves with the contents of the article, another set of tasks checking comprehension can follow:

2. Comment on the author’s intention behind the metaphor. Do you think this metaphor is effective enough? Give reasons explaining the author’s choice of language means to express his opinion that way. What are the ways in which the idea expressed by the metaphor in the headline is further developed or explained in the body of the article? Translate the headline into your language. Focus on the changes you have to make to keep the image/concept unchanged.

In addition, a number of various tasks can be produced, aimed at a closer and more demanding analysis of newspaper metaphors. For instance, the whole article or an extract containing a prolonged metaphor can be offered to students’ attention. As we know, a prolonged metaphor is not confined to one image but involves a number of contributory images. It is obligatory on the teacher’s part to decide whether these supporting images as well as the central one should be italicized or highlighted in the text such as that:

The great EU *power carve-up* has begun. It is *a battle fought* with high-flown rhetoric, backroom horse-trading, "strongly worded statements", audacious leaks to the press and brinkmanship. *The battlefield* is a staid debating chamber at the European Parliament in Brussels and there is *not a tank or a pikestaff* in sight. Twenty first century Europe prefers jaw-jaw to *war-war* (The Guardian, 2003).

As students’ competence grows the tasks can become more challenging with all the clues to both the central image metaphor and the supporting ones removed from the text. The follow up activities can involve such tasks as retelling the text, translating metaphoric structures, explaining the choice of expression or

commenting on the pragmatic aspect of the metaphor and its role in the text. The teacher can also create some additional tasks for further practice in decoding metaphors, and offer activities aimed at dealing with metaphors viewing them as effective tools of political influence. The students can be asked to figure out what type of realia – those culture specific elements, which are often abundant in politicians' speeches all over the globe – are behind the metaphors present in the text in question. The number of such tasks depends on students' language proficiency and is an option.

## Conclusion

In this article we have discussed the importance and a method of teaching to perceive and decode newspaper metaphors, which, we assume, can be effective in teaching some other tropes, such as metonymy, periphrasis or simile observed in newspaper texts. We have briefly outlined the ways of getting students of English as a target language to practice their skills in practical application of their knowledge of stylistics. The types of tasks which can be set, communicative activities designed to monitor the progress made and to motivate the students, as well as the speed expected from the students, are subject to any change depending on the kind of feedback a teacher wants to get from the students. We imply that further, more detailed research into the matter is needed. It should be mentioned though, that the applied method may prove effective only on condition that the listed activities are introduced to students on a regular basis.

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