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**MEANING CONSTRUCTION IN ENGLISH AS L2: COGNITIVE PROCESSING OF
IDIOMATIC LANGUAGE**

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Master's thesis

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to investigate if making students of English as a second language (L2) aware of the metaphors behind idioms that they are taught can help them determine the meanings of unfamiliar idioms with those same underlying metaphors. The first part of the thesis is an overview of previous research within the framework of cognitive linguistics regarding idiomatic expressions and an overview of previous research regarding learning idioms in English as L2. The second part of the thesis describes a study conducted on L2 learners in a school in Zagreb, Croatia to determine if making the learners aware of the conceptual metaphors behind given idioms helps determine the meanings of those idioms.

Keywords: Cognitive linguistics, idioms, conceptual metaphor, meaning construction

Sažetak

Cilj ovog rada je istražiti olakšava li osvještavanje postojanja konceptualnih metafora na kojima su temeljeni idiom učenicima engleskog kao drugog jezika učenje idioma, odnosno olakšava li im određivanje značenja nepoznatih idioma koji u bazi imaju tu konceptualnu metaforu. Prvi dio rada je pregled dosadašnjeg istraživanja na području kognitivne lingvistike u vezi s idiomatskim izrazima i pregled dosadašnjeg istraživanja učenja i podučavanja idioma u engleskom kao drugom jeziku. Drugi dio rada opisuje istraživanje provedeno nad učenicima engleskog kao drugog jezika u jednoj gimnaziji u Zagrebu kako bi se odredilo utječe li izdvajanje konceptualnih metafora pozitivno na određivanje značenja novih idioma.

Ključne riječi: Kognitivna lingvistika, idiomi, konceptualna metafora, konstruiranje značenja

1. Introduction

Besides denotative meanings of single words, a lexicon of a language includes countless connotative meanings and multi-word units which are standard for a native speaker's vocabulary. For some of these units contextual signs can be used to deduct the meaning, but sometimes the meaning is almost entirely opaque and seems completely unrelated to the literal meaning of the used words. Idioms fall under this category. They are an important part of comprehending a language in its native context. They share cultural and historical information and broaden people's understanding of a language. English as a language is particularly rich in idioms and finding a way of teaching learners to not only know the meaning of each single idiom, but to be able to find patterns in idiom formation would be very helpful for development of their communicative skills.

It has become widely true that students are exposed to the English language more so in everyday life than they are in schools. So far English school books have organized idioms according to key words in such a way that the students had to learn the meaning of each idiom by heart. Experts began to question if students had to be taught specific meanings of idioms at all, or if they could simply be taught the patterns in idiomatic meaning construction which would help them determine the meanings of new idioms they encounter in everyday life. We conducted a study to determine to what extent focusing on the underlying conceptual metaphors related to particular idioms could help learners make sense of the idioms in question and determine their meanings.

2. Theoretical background

2. 1. Idioms and idiomaticity

According to the most common definition, idioms are linguistic expressions whose overall meaning cannot be predicted from the meanings of the constituent parts. (Kövecses and Szabó, 1996, p. 326). It was believed that the meanings of words are arbitrarily stipulated in memory and the meanings of phrases derived from the meanings and the syntactic structure of the words that compose them. Therefore, it was believed that the meanings of idioms must also be arbitrarily stipulated in memory since their meanings cannot be derived compositionally by the morphosyntactic rules of language. This was often backed up with examples such as *kick the bucket* or *spill the beans* in which there is no obvious connection between the actual meanings of the words that constitute the phrase. In the first example, the action of using your foot to strike a cylindrical vessel used for holding or carrying liquids or solids cannot be obviously connected with dying. Likewise, the action of causing the seeds of herbs of the genus *Phaseolus* in the pea family to fall out of a container cannot be obviously connected to revealing a secret. This resulted in the treatment of idioms as dead metaphors, the idea here being that phrases like these were at a certain time metaphorical but have lost their metaphoricity over time. (Gibbs 1994, p. 10)

As proposed by Lakoff and Johnson, idioms are in fact connected with metaphors, however not as figures of speech but as cognitive mechanisms. In 1980 in their book *Metaphors we live by* they were the first to describe metaphors not just as figures of speech as they were considered all the way from ancient literature, but redefined them as conceptual mechanisms we use every day. Lakoff (1993, as cited in Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez and Mairal Usón, 2007, p. 33) states that in cognitive linguistics a metaphor is generally defined as a cognitive mapping (or set of correspondences) across discrete conceptual domains or domains of knowledge in the mind, while Ibáñez and Usón (2007, p.33) define metonymy as a domain-internal mapping where one of the domains involved provides a point of access to the other. Both processes are central to our understanding of how meaning is constructed in actual language use, since they regulate much of our inferential activity, including pragmatic implications.

At least two reasons can be found to differentiate idioms from dead metaphors. According to Lakoff and Turner (1989) there are plenty of basic conventional metaphors that are alive, certainly enough to show that what is conventional and fixed need not be dead. Some of the most famous examples are LIFE IS A JOURNEY and ANGER IS HEAT. These metaphors are core to a vast number of idioms which refer to life and anger and which are not only present in already established idioms, but are also so engrained in people's minds that they are grounds for production of new idioms. Part of the problem with the traditional view of idioms stems from the view's inability to account for contemporary speakers' metaphorical schemes of thought. For this reason, the traditional view simply cannot explain why so many idioms and their figurative meanings make sense to speakers. This is why recent research and contemporary researchers no longer views idioms as non-compositional strings of words showing that not all of them are as unanalyzable and opaque as *kick the bucket* or *spill the beans*. In fact, it has been shown that many idiomatic phrases are decomposable or analyzable with the meanings of their parts contributing independently to their overall figurative meanings.

As a result researchers today differ on whether the constituents of an idiom still have individual meanings or whether there is a connection between the meaning of the idiom as a whole and the meaning of its constituent parts. From the cognitive perspective the traditional view is thought not to have the understanding necessary to look beyond the non-compositionality.

2.2. Cognitivist view of idioms

Cognitive linguists have shown that not all idioms are as opaque and unanalyzable as *kick the bucket* and that for most of them some sort of relation between their meaning and their form can be established. According to this view, most idioms lie somewhere in between the two extremes of complete non-compositionality such as *kick the bucket* and non-idiomatic phrases whose meanings are derived fully from the meanings of their constituent parts such as *wooden table*. Fernando (1996) calls them conventionalized multiword expressions which are often but not always non-literal.

Vega-Moreno (2003, p. 305) divided idioms into 3 groups:

1. Normally decomposable idioms are those in which each constituent word contributes individually and independently to the interpretation of the meaning of the idiom (e.g. *pop the question*).

2. Abnormally decomposable idioms are those where the overall literal meaning of the whole phrase is semantically related to its idiomatic meaning and is so used in its interpretation (e.g. *burry the hatchet*).

3. Non-decomposable idioms are those in which the constituent words neither individually nor as a whole can be semantically related to the idiomatic meaning of the phrase (e.g. *break a leg*).

Apart from their meaning, idiomatic expressions also have specific morphosyntactic characteristics. Traditionally idioms were considered to be fixed expressions, highly restricted in their lexicogrammatical behavior. It has been observed, however, that similar to their semantic predictability and interpretation, there are also levels of restrictiveness in their lexicogrammatical features or frozenness. Some idioms allow wide variability of their lexical constituents while others are strictly fixed to specific constituents and do not allow for any of them to be replaced with something else. Similar to this, some idioms allow a wide range of morphological and syntactic forms while others have specific fixed forms and allow little or no change (Langlotz, 2006). Because of this, Langlotz (2006, p. 3) defines idioms as complex symbols with specific formal, semantic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic characteristics. He has created the following division to summarize the previously stated characteristics (see Table 1).

Table 1 Parameters for the definition of idioms

Semiotic dimension	Feature	Term
GRAMMATICAL STATUS	Degree of conventionalization or familiarity	institutionalization
FORM	Formal complexity of construction: multiword unit	compositeness
	Lexicogrammatical behavior: restricted syntactic, morphosyntactic	frozenness

	and lexical variability	
MEANING	Meaning cannot be derived from constituent words but is extended/figurative.	non-compositionality

Institutionalization refers to an idiom's degree of familiarity within a given speech community, compositeness refers to the multiword construction of an idiom, frozenness refers to the restrictions lexicogrammatical forms, and non-compositionality refers to the fact that the meaning of the overall phrase is not the sum of the meanings of its constituents. The latter was traditionally taken to be the primary feature in defining idioms.

Since for decomposable idioms, unlike non-decomposable, speakers can easily identify the role of each constituent in the interpretation of the overall idiomatic meaning of the phrase, decomposable idioms are far more flexible than non-decomposable. Speakers have a clear understanding of which constituent contributes to the meaning in which way and which part of the idiom carries the most idiomaticity. This is why they feel comfortable to vary the idiom grammatically. For example, to put it in the past tense or in the passive or even make lexical variations with its constituents.

According to different linguists, as cited by Gibbs (2010, p. 704), unlike the comprehension of literal language, idioms are presumably understood in one of four different ways:

1. Through the retrieval of their stipulated meanings from the lexicon after their literal meanings have been rejected as inappropriate (Weinreich 1969; Bobrow and Bell 1973);
2. In parallel to processing of their literal meanings (Swinney and Cutler 1979);
3. Directly without any analysis of their literal meanings (Gibbs 1980, 1986)
4. When there has been significant input to recognize a configuration as an idiom (Cacciari and Tabossi 1988; Tabossi and Zardon 1993).

Gibbs' experimental studies published in 1994 show that 3 and 4 provide the best descriptions of the ways in which idioms are understood. The analyzability of idioms is usually a matter of

degree depending on the salience of its individual parts. The speakers find some relationship with the literal meaning of the constituents and the metaphorical meaning of the idiom (let off steam – let off=release from container, steam=anger), but not all constituents can be transparent to the same degree. In these cases, speakers can predict only a part of the meaning of the idiom while their other part remains unknown thus the metaphoricality is not evenly spread out across the entire phrase (rock the boat – rock=disturb, upset, even outside idiomatic phrases; the boat=unknown). (Gibbs, 2010, p. 706)

2.3. Constructing meaning in idioms

The traditional view sees idioms as “a special set of larger category of words” (Kövecses and Szabó, 1996, p. 3). They are assumed to be separate from any conceptual system and a matter of language alone and, just like words, have an arbitrarily stipulated meaning in the lexicon, certain syntactic properties, and a special meaning separated from the meanings of their individual constituents. Cognitive linguists have found that this view is what makes idiom analysis and consequentially the teaching of idioms difficult.

Firstly, cognitive linguists believe that “meaning does not reside in linguistic units but is constructed in the minds of language users.” (Radden, Kopcke, Berg, and Siemund, 2007, p. 12). The meanings of words are arbitrary from their form and are stored in our minds in the form of mental lexicon, but only the denotative meanings are arbitrary while connotative meanings are motivated through the use of cognitive mechanisms, the most common being metaphor and metonymy. The listener takes underspecified linguistic units as prompts and constructs from them a meaningful conceptual representation. According to Radden, Kopcke, Berg, and Siemund (2007, p. 5-8) there are several types of underspecification:

1. Implicitness – when either no linguistic unit is present or the linguistic unit is not conventionally associated with a particular meaning. This is the most common type of underspecification.

2. Indeterminacy – when a linguistic unit is underspecified due to its vagueness in meaning.

3. Incompatibility – this may occur between lexical units or between lexical and grammatical units. Instances when interlocutors need to construct meanings in order to reconcile the conflict between expressions such as antonyms, metaphor, metonymy, oxymoron, understatement, mismatches between a construction and a lexical unit used in it etc.

Researchers have found that idioms are motivated in this same way and they use cognitive mechanisms which link specific domains of knowledge to idiomatic meanings. For most idioms the most important cognitive mechanisms are metaphor, metonymy, and conventional knowledge. Another interesting fact about the cognitive processing of idioms was shown through a series of reading-time studies which found that people took significantly less time to process decomposable idioms than to read non-decomposable expressions (Gibbs, Nayak, and Cutting 1989). Both normally and abnormally decomposable phrases took less time to process than their respective literal control phrases, but non-decomposable idioms actually took longer to process than their respective literal controls. This data suggests that people attempt to do some compositional analysis when understanding idiomatic phrases. When an idiom is decomposable, readers can assign independent meanings to its individual parts and will quickly recognize how these meaningful parts combine to form the overall figurative interpretation of the phrase.

2.4. Syntactic behavior of idioms

Linguists have suggested a number of devices to predict the syntactic behavior of idioms. Gibbs (2010, p. 708) gives a few examples: one is the organization of idioms into a frozenness hierarchy (Fraser, 1970) ranging from expressions that undergo almost all grammatical transformations while retaining their figurative meaning to expressions that cannot undergo any transformations without losing their figurative meanings. A more recent suggestion by O'Grady (1998) describes different grammatical principles that limit the forms of idioms. Unfortunately, Gibbs states that none of these syntactic accounts explains how people come to acquire the rules for knowing which transformations or constraints apply or do not apply to which idioms. He says that speakers are not explicitly taught which idioms, and other formulaic phrases, are syntactically productive and which are not, yet they

somehow learn about the syntactic behavior of most idioms, including relatively rare and novel phrases.

3. Idioms and second language acquisition – previous research

3.1. Understanding idioms in L1 speakers

At present there has been a vast body of research in cognitive linguistics on idiom comprehension and learning both in L1 and L2 speakers. According to Cooper (1999, p. 234-236) there are four theories of L1 idiom comprehension.

1. The idiom-list hypothesis, proposed by Bobrow and Bell (1973) suggests that a native speaker first interprets the idiom literally. If their interpretation does not fit the context where the idiom was encountered, the speaker searches for the idiom in his/her special idiom mental lexicon or a list of idioms and chooses a figurative meaning. This theory was based on an experiment in which participants were given expressions in context, first with their literal meaning, and then with their figurative meaning. They were later asked which meaning comes to mind first after being presented with an isolated expression without context. The findings showed that participants chose the literal meaning first and only chose the figurative one when the idiom was presented in a context requiring the figurative meaning. This hypothesis was later rejected based on more recent findings which showed that when measuring the speed of recognition of the meaning of idioms participants never understood the literal meaning more quickly than the figurative ones.

2. Lexical representation hypothesis, proposed by Swinney and Cutler (1979) considered idioms to be long words stored in the mental lexicon with all other words and a speaker processes both the literal and the idiomatic meaning of the idiom at the same time when encountering it. The context determines which meaning will be used in the specific situation. The experiment that led to this conclusion contained word strings on a computer screen and participants had to decide if the string formed a meaningful natural phrase in English while their reaction was timed. In addition to these word strings, random appearances of idiomatic and literal expressions were shown on the screen and the participants reacted

faster to idioms. This led to the conclusion that there is no special idiom list or processing mode and refuted Bobrow and Bell's hypothesis.

3. Direct access hypothesis, proposed by Gibbs (1980 and 1984) and also Schweigert (1986) stated that a native speaker rarely considers the literal meaning but retrieves the figurative meaning of an idiom directly from the mental lexicon, a hypothesis similar to the lexical representation hypothesis, which is why it is considered to be its extension. It also explains that the reason why the experiments showed that participants react to idiomatic expressions faster than to comparable literal expressions was because they do not have to go through the lexical, syntactic and semantic processing required for full linguistic analysis of literal expressions. The more conventional and familiar the idiom is, the less time it takes to process it because the speakers retrieve its meaning directly from the mental lexicon without having to interpret its literal meaning.

4. The composition model (Gibbs, 1994; Tabossi and Zardon, 1995) is the most current theory. Cooper (1999) explains that this theory states that people do not inhibit or shut down their normal language-processing mode when they encounter an idiomatic phrase: their syntactic parser automatically analyzes the grammatical structure of the words and phrases they hear or read; the lexical processor accesses the lexical items in the mental lexicon and assigns a meaning to them; and a semantic analysis is undertaken on the basis of the grammatical structure and the meaning of the lexical items of the phrase. Idioms are processed just like any phrase or sentence, and the meanings of the individual words of the idiom generally contribute to the overall figurative interpretation of the phrase.

Rohani, Ketabi and Tavakoli (2012, p.105) state that, in general, studies of idiom comprehension focus on three major factors: semantic transparency, familiarity, and context.

Transparency is the degree of agreement between the literal and figurative meanings of an idiom. If the two meanings match well the idiom is transparent. E.g. *play your cards right* is very transparent in suggesting the meaning of making the best use of your assets and opportunities. Semantic transparency is not an absolute feature, and many idioms are neither completely transparent nor opaque. Transparency can also be discussed in terms of decomposition since speakers can intuitively understand the degree of compositionality, i. e. which components of the idiom contribute to the whole meaning and to what extent. This

makes the idiom seem more transparent and thus it is more likely for it to be syntactically flexible.

The familiarity of an idiom is connected to understanding its meaning. Idioms which are more familiar are easier to understand. The findings are in agreement with the “language experience” hypothesis, the view that frequency of exposure enhances learning the meanings of idioms.

3.2. Understanding idioms in L2

According to Hoffman (1983, p. 37) English-speaking people on average use over 3000 metaphors and 7000 idioms weekly. However, there is a discrepancy between the usage in native and foreign language speakers in terms of metaphoric expressions. For example, as the native speakers use their automated pragmatic experiences in their communication, they cannot make a distinction between connotative and denotative meaning of a word. However, according to Charteris-Black (2002), when L2 learners are confronted with the meanings of a word they are unfamiliar with, they have an inclination to refer first to the denotative meanings of words out of the knowledge they constructed while at the point of learning that language, not to pragmatic foundations. For this reason acquiring metaphoric competence plays a significant role in language learning.

Research on processing L2 idioms has mainly focused on the influence of L1 transfer. Irujo (1986) conducted a study to see if advanced learners of English used their knowledge of their mother tongue (Spanish) in processing L2 idiomatic expressions. Her experiment contained 3 groups of English idioms: those that are identical, those that are similar, and those that are very different from the students’ mother tongue idioms. The results showed that the idioms easiest to understand and produce were those which were identical to Spanish idioms. Similar idioms were easy to understand but had errors in production and different idioms were the hardest to understand and produce but with no evidence of transfer in production. Moreover, mother tongue interference was higher in similar idioms than it was in very different ones. This research shows that L2 learners rely heavily on their L1 in processing idioms.

Cooper's research (1999) investigates L2 idiom processing strategies and compares them to L1 processing strategies on a list of 20 idioms using the so-called think-aloud research method where the researchers recorded the participants in their verbal analyzing of the idioms. The conclusion he made was that idioms are first interpreted literally. If the literal meaning of an idiom does not fit the context in which the expression is situated, the native speaker searches for the idiom in a special mental idiom lexicon and then chooses the figurative meaning

Bulutu and Çelik-Yazici (2004) conducted a similar research on Turkish learners of English. They showed that the speakers will first make use of the context, and if that does not help, they will use the background knowledge, literal meaning, or the knowledge of their L1. The research also showed that the idiom type or the register an idiom belongs to has no influence on the comprehension and that the learners do not use one single strategy when encountering an unknown idiom but use a variety of strategies, which was in line with Cooper's results.

3.3. Teaching idioms to L2 learners

The biggest reason why idioms are difficult to learn and teach is because of their figurative meanings. Since L1 speakers are also aware of the fact that idioms do not mean the sum of their constituents, often in conversations with L2 speakers they leave out idiomatic language and simplify it to literal expressions so that the learners are left unaware of the real frequency of their use. Because of these difficulties, and of the fact that literal expressions with the same meaning can always be used instead of idioms, most textbooks for L2 learners provide exercises for learning idioms without explaining them or their underlying metaphors, and these exercises are usually separated from other vocabulary.

Unlike Irujo (1986), Awwad (1990, p. 59) divides idioms into four groups which represent different degrees of difficulty of translation. This can be used not only in translation but also in L2 learning and teaching. The groups are:

a) Idioms with no correspondence between expressions and functions in the two languages. Both the expression and its function are specific to a language.

b) Idioms with corresponding functions in the two languages but with completely different expressions.

c) Idioms with corresponding functions but with slightly different expressions.

d) Idioms with corresponding functions and expressions in both languages.

In a study by Samani and Hashemian (2012) idioms were taught to two groups of students. One group was taught in a traditional way and the other was given conceptual metaphor instruction. The instruction lasted for one semester. Results showed that conceptual metaphor instruction had a significant effect on learning idioms.

Li (2010, p. 208-209) stated that three aspects should be considered for applying conceptual metaphors in idioms teaching. Firstly, L2 teachers' metaphorical competence should be improved. Secondly, L2 learners' metaphorical awareness should be cultivated. Finally, relevant cultural background should be provided and explained.

Deignan, Gabrys and Solska (1997) conducted an experiment in translation where they tried to raise the students' awareness of the differences of the two languages they were working with, Polish and English. They came to the conclusion that awareness-raising through discussion and comparison of metaphors in L1 and L2 is a useful approach to helping learners to understand and appropriately produce metaphors.

In a study by K m r and  imen (2009) a list of idiomatic expressions was chosen and taught to Turkish students of English as L2 through five lesson plans with metaphorically enriched activities in order to see possible effects on learning idioms. Each lesson plan was aimed to make the students think of a specific metaphor, they were presented with other expressions that go with the same metaphor, and were finally asked to interpret the expressions in their own words. This was done and after the lessons and the results were compared. All in all, the lessons were communicative and intended to make the students use the expressions. The aim of the research was to determine whether gaining control over conceptual metaphors can enable language learners to successfully deal with the idioms in the target language. Most of the students' interpretations of the expressions were more correct on average after the lessons. Some of the expressions were on average less correctly interpreted. The students stated that the use of metaphors in learning idioms helped them to guess the meanings of the idioms, and thus, contribute to their vocabulary development. The result of

the comprehension of some idioms decreased, but the reason for this might be due to their awareness level and perceptions for idiomatic expressions, i.e. the transfer of strategies or direct translations due to cross-cultural differences in conventionalized metaphoric themes. However, the overall data showed that the students benefited from this implementation in learning pre-set idioms.

All of these findings show that language learners may find it easier to learn the role of conceptual metaphors if they are encouraged to think about them both in their native language and the language they are learning. Explaining a conceptual metaphor to students may help them anticipate the meanings of idioms in a language since one conceptual metaphor motivates the meanings of a larger number of different idioms. For example, giving a number of idioms with the same underlying conceptual metaphor e.g. DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO MOTION (*to drive someone into a corner; to put a spoke in someone's wheel; in a bind; in a fix; in a jam; up the creek (without a paddle); in queer street*) and explaining the metaphor behind them may result in the student's analyzing idioms they encounter in the future via the conceptual metaphors that were explained to them. Presenting them with more idioms with the same underlying metaphor afterwards (e.g. *with one's back to the wall; there is no way out; between a rock and a hard place; caught in a cleft stick; encirclement; bottleneck; logjam*) may trigger their knowledge of the most common conceptual metaphors in the L2 and interpret the meaning of the idioms via those metaphors to determine that the meaning has something to do with the concept of difficulty. Combined with the linguistic context of the idiom, the students are more likely to decode its meaning.

4. Study

4.1. Aim and research question

Teaching idioms in English as L2 in Croatian schools has mostly been based on concentrating on a particular keyword. Students are presented with various unrelated meanings based on one of the components, for example idioms with see: *see eye to eye, see red, see through someone* etc. In addition, they were lead to believe that idioms cannot be "decomposed" or analyzed. However, with the rise of cognitive linguistics and the awareness of cognitive metaphors and metonymies inherent to all idioms, more and more researchers

have become interested in different ways of teaching idioms by relating them to metaphors and metonymies, as shown in the overview of previous research. According to Samani and Hashemian (2012, p. 254) “learning vocabulary, expressions, and idioms presented in an organized fashion is easier than random lists of idioms”. Organizing lexis, idioms, and expressions in groups is effective for L2 learners because it facilitates connecting the new items with already familiar ones. Therefore, it is reasonable to introduce L2 learners with grouping of words, idioms, and expressions that are made up of familiar items and just a few new, unfamiliar ones, and then help them add more expressions to the established groups as they discover them later. Idioms can be grouped according to conceptual metaphors, or the source domains they have in common.

Since a single conceptual metaphor underlies a number of idioms, the students can learn about particular metaphors and their relation to idioms. If they are presented with a group of idioms related to a certain metaphor, they are more likely to remember the idioms later, as well as make intelligent guesses about the meaning of new idioms with the same underlying metaphor. The aim of this study is to answer the following question:

Is it enough to make students aware of an underlying conceptual metaphor to facilitate meaning construction and understanding of the idiom in question?

4.2. Sample

While recruiting our research participants, we considered two elements: capacity of abstract thought and language competence. English is taught from grade 1 in Croatian schools and, according to the widely accepted psychological theory, complex abstract thought is developed around age 12. Thus learners of English in their eighth grade, who are on average 14 years old, were selected as an appropriate sample. They were believed to have enough language knowledge to learn a larger number of idioms, as well as understand underlying metaphoric meaning. The participants consisted of three groups of eight graders from a Croatian elementary school. All groups, with a total of 63 students, attended the same school (*Sveta Klara Elementary School, Zagreb, Croatia*) and had the same English teacher. Based on the results of the pilot study it was determined that the biggest problem was the students’ motivation to complete the entire questionnaire and to provide as much relevant data as possible. They tended to complete the multiple choice tasks while skipping the parts of those

tasks involving explanations. It was also discovered that the participants of the pilot research had problems with understanding basic vocabulary. Based on the test results of a participant who had been studying English for 10 years, we concluded that older students would be more appropriate test subjects.

Therefore, the study was conducted again with students attending the second grade of a prominent grammar school. The level of overall language competence was expected to be higher due to the students' age (two years older than the students from the pilot study) and their longer experience in learning English, as well as the particular type of school where the research was conducted. Namely, the admission to this school requires top grades from the previous levels of education. The participants in the research were students of class 2a and 2b, both male and female. Class 2a was a bilingual class, meaning their lectures are held both in English and Croatian. The study was conducted with a total of 36 students, 22 from class 2a and 14 from class 2b. One half of the students from each class were placed in the research group and the other half in the control group totaling each group at 18 participants.

4.3. Research Instrument

The research instrument was made in the form of a test containing 3 tasks which contained idioms based on seven conceptual metaphors. The test for both groups was the same in every way except for:

1. The research group participants were given an additional resource sheet (see Appendix B) which contained explanations of all seven conceptual metaphors on which all the idioms in the research instrument were based. The metaphor explanations were given in Croatian. The control group participants were not given this sheet.
2. The front page of the research group test contained an additional short explanation of conceptual metaphors in idioms based on the example: 'TO RISE equals SUCCESS' and 'TO FALL equals FAILURE' (see Appendix B). This explanation was given in Croatian. The control group test did not contain this explanation.

The conceptual metaphors represented in this study, and as shown to the students of the research group, are the following:

Ljutnja je kao da gorimo ili da nam je jako vruće

Ljutita osoba je kao spremnik pod pritiskom (gotovo će eksplodirati)

Razgovor je kao kretanje (možemo se kretati od teme do teme, biti na pravom ili krivom putu, skretati...)

Život je kao putovanje (možemo krenuti, prekinuti putovanje, započeti drugačije putovanje...)

Sreća je kao biti visoko ili se penjati prema visinama, dok je nesreća biti nisko i dolje

Ideje su kao biljke (mogu imati korijen, rasti, granati se, možemo ih sasjeći u korijenu)

Novac je kao tekućina (može se prelijevati s jednog mjesta na drugo, može presušiti...)

Task 1 was aimed at gathering information about the students' previous knowledge of idioms. The task contained 12 sentences, each one containing an idiom based on one of the seven metaphors mentioned above (see Appendix A and B). In tasks 1 a), b), and c) students were supposed to mark the following: a) if they knew the meaning of the idiom, b) did not know the meaning but can guess it based on the context or c) if they already used it when speaking English. In addition to filling out the table, task 1 d) was added as a check – if the students could make a difference between idiomatic and literal meaning, they would successfully connect the sentences with the same idiomatic meaning regardless of their literal meaning.

Task 2 was aimed at determining if the research group would be better at explaining idioms based on the conceptual metaphors which were explained to them (see Appendix A and B). The task contained 10 sentences in English each containing an idiom and boxes a) b) and c) next to each sentence stating, as in Task 1, that the students know the idiom from before, do not know it but believe they can guess the meaning, or already use the idiom in communication or. In box d) the students were asked to explain or translate the idiom into Croatian. The students were not told which metaphor was connected to which idiom. The most interesting and valuable idioms for this research were the ones whose meanings the students did not know from before.

Task 3 was aimed at determining if the students from the research group could match the idioms in English with their translations to Croatian better than the students from the control group. The students from the research group were expected to perform better at this

task seeing as they were presented with the underlying conceptual metaphors for the idioms in question. The Croatian translations were given without containing idiomatic language themselves.

4.4. Procedure

As mentioned before, the students were divided into two groups: a control group which was given a test with tasks containing idioms with no explanation or mention of the underlying metaphors for those idioms, and a research group which was presented with a separate resource sheet explaining in short the underlying metaphors for the idioms in the test, but without examples (see Appendix B). The resource sheet presented the students with seven different cognitive metaphors, and all the idioms in the test were based on those seven metaphors. The metaphors were explained in Croatian. Two of the conceptual metaphors had the same basic concept – anger, but with two distinguishable metaphors related to that concept. This was aimed at testing if the students can make a distinction between these two metaphors even though the two have the same target domain. The first page of the test for the research group, containing placeholders for the information about the students, also contained a short explanation of idioms and metaphors in Croatian on an example of a metaphor which was contained in the research instrument in English, but which was also present in Croatian (see Appendix B).

All students had to write down the school and grade they attended in order for the researcher to be able to place their copy of the research instrument into context in case the tests got mixed up, but they did not have to write down their name. This was aimed at lowering the students' anxiety in completing the tasks since students often feel more pressure to perform better in exams where they have to sign their name. Since it was expected of students to feel less pressure to perform better, it was also expected that students would not try to ask for help from their classmates in filling out the test and would do it on their own. The students also had to write down how long they have been studying English to determine if there were differences in their previous knowledge and possible competence level, and if potential lower scores were influenced by a shorter time spent learning English. The students also had to write down if they spoke another foreign language better than English. The instructions in the test were written in Croatian for better understanding.

Before the tests were distributed, the students were told that the results would be used for research purposes only and it was explained that this is why their names were not needed, but it was very important to fill out the first page of the test with all the required information. They were told that the tests are completely anonymous, but that this research is very important and that their contribution will be highly appreciated. They were told that one of the aims of the research is to improve their class structure in such a way that the information gathered from the research will determine if the way they are taught right now is the best way there is, and if something can be changed to improve their learning and make it easier and more efficient. It was emphasized that because of this, it is very important for them to show both what they know and what they do not know. This was aimed to motivate the students to do their best regardless of the fact that they will not be graded for their work, but also to motivate them not to copy the answers from their classmates in trying to show better results, but rather to sincerely fill out the test to the best of their abilities.

After the tests were handed out, the tasks were explained to the students. It was pointed out that the test was based on phrases and non-literal meanings. The students were told not to hesitate to ask for explanations if there were any single words they did not understand, but they will not be given the meanings of full phrases or sentences since the point of the research was to see if they could figure out the meaning of the full phrase for themselves.

To get better results in comparison to the pilot study, the motivation prior to filling out the test was also adapted. Firstly, since a large number of students in the pilot study left tasks 1 d) and 2 d) empty, it was emphasized to the research participants that tasks 1 d) and 2 d) are very important and to please take note of this and fill them out. It was also emphasized that in case they do not know the answer to something they should write down '*I don't know*' as opposed to leaving the space empty. This way it would be known that the task was not skipped by accident but that the student honestly did not know the answer and could not think of one. Secondly, the purpose of the research was explained in a bit more detail. The students of both classes were told that the research deals with non-literal meanings, and the reason anyone would research this field in language is because of various reasons:

a) In order for us to understand different cultures and different languages better, we need to know how different people make connections between seemingly non-relatable things and concepts.

b) Language teaching is specific and different to any other subject in school. It was considered for a long time that idioms simply have to be learned by heart. Lately research has shown that there are reasons why certain idioms have the meaning that they have and we should try and find out if our students are capable of noticing these regularities and coming to the conclusion of the meaning of an idiom themselves.

c) Phraseology and idioms are one of the reasons why there is basically no chance of a universal translator ever existing. So far no machine can make the seemingly random connections between idioms and their meanings. But if we get to the core of idiom formation and find the regularities within them, we could perhaps someday program these regularities and algorithms into our computers and teach them to make conclusions about meanings of idioms themselves. By actively participating in this research and giving their best, the students involved can help us get one step closer towards making all of this happen.

4.5. Results

The aim of Task 1 was to gather information about the students' previous knowledge of idioms. The purpose of the task was to make sure there was no large difference between the previous knowledge of idioms between participants of the two groups: the control group (C) and the research group (R). As previously mentioned, students that knew a certain idiom from before marked it with a), students that were not familiar with the idiom but thought they could guess its meaning based on the context marked it with b), and students that knew and already used the idiom marked it with c) (see Appendix A and B, Task 1) Table 2 shows the variations in previous knowledge between members of the two groups.

Table 2: Results of Task 1 for group C and group R

	Idiom		a	b	c
1	It made my blood boil .	C	5	4	9
		R	12	5	1
2	We talked for long and covered a lot of ground	C	6	6	6
		R	12	3	2
3	We seem to be at a crossroads .	C	12	2	4
		R	14	3	1
4	You're on the right track .	C	3	0	14
		R	5	0	13
5	This belief quickly took root	C	3	12	1
		R	5	12	0
6	She often flares up over nothing	C	10	5	3
		R	10	6	0
7	After I finally graduated I was in seventh heaven .	C	9	0	9
		R	11	1	3
8	They remembered the departed in their prayers.	C	7	9	2
		R	9	5	2
9	When my mother saw the state of the house after the party, she blew her top off!	C	7	7	4
		R	10	6	2
10	I lost my cool after she told me she forgot to feed the dog.	C	5	4	9
		R	7	4	7
11	She has a fertile imagination .	C	12	5	1
		R	8	8	2
12	It's all been going downhill since the accident.	C	6	0	12
		R	10	0	9

Since both a) and c) imply being already familiar with the meaning of the idiom, we will use their added number for each sentence in each group to compare results, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Comparing results of familiar and unfamiliar idioms from Task 1 for groups C and R

	Idiom		knows idiom from before	does not know idiom from before, can guess meaning
1	It made my blood boil.	C	14	4
		R	13	5
2	We talked for long and covered a lot of ground	C	12	6
		R	14	3
3	We seem to be at a crossroads.	C	16	2
		R	15	3
4	You're on the right track.	C	17	0
		R	18	0
5	This belief quickly took root	C	4	12
		R	5	12
6	She often flares up over nothing	C	13	5
		R	10	6
7	After I finally graduated I was in seventh heaven.	C	18	0
		R	14	1
8	They remembered the departed in their prayers.	C	8	9
		R	11	5
9	When my mother saw the state of the house after the party, she blew her top off!	C	11	7
		R	12	6
10	I lost my cool after she told me she forgot to feed the dog.	C	14	4
		R	14	4
11	She has a fertile imagination.	C	13	5
		R	11	8
12	It's all been going downhill since the accident.	C	18	0
		R	19	0

As seen from Table 3, the previous knowledge of idioms in both groups is similar. When observing the results for the sentences with idioms generally familiar to the participants (to more than two thirds of the students in each group - sentences 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 10 and 12), 86, 5% of the students from the control group were familiar with these idioms and 84, 92% of the students from the research group are familiar with them. This difference of 1.58% is rather low and thus can be considered irrelevant for the results of the research. Idioms which were familiar to around a half of the students from each group (in sentences 6, 9, 11) are familiar to 68.51% of students in the control group, and to 61, 11% of the students in the research group. The remaining 2 idioms (in sentences 5 and 8) are familiar to 33, 33% of the students in the control group, and to 44, 44% of the students in the research group. The overall results and the difference in previous knowledge is shown below in Table 4: all students from the control group are familiar with 73.14% of the idioms from Task 1, and all students from the research group with 72.22% of the idioms from Task 1, which can be considered an irrelevant difference in knowledge for the overall results of the research. Therefore, the sample can be considered valid and representative.

Table 4: Overall results of previous idiom knowledge in Task 1 for groups C and R

	Percentage of familiar idioms	Percentage of unfamiliar idioms
C	73,14	26,86
R	72,22	27,78

The aim of Task 1d) was to additionally check the level of the students' language competence by checking if the students could recognize that the idioms used in the sentences were, firstly, not used with their literal meanings and, secondly, that some of them had similar meanings to others regardless of the completely different lexemes they consisted of (see Appendix A and B, Task 1d). As shown in Table 5 below, more students from the control group successfully noticed that idioms in sentences 1, 6, 9, and 10 all had similar meanings (to get angry) showing that initially they had overall better understanding of the meanings of particular idioms in the given sentences. This would lead to the assumption that, if both groups were given the same exact test, primarily the one given to the control group which did not contain explanations or examples of conceptual metaphors, the control group would have

better results. Furthermore, this could mean that if the research group has better or even similar test results in Task 2 and Task 3, it is possible that the additional explanation of the conceptual metaphors used in the test had, in fact, helped in better understanding the meanings of idioms.

Table 5: connecting sentences 1, 6, 9 and 10 in Task 1d)

none	C	1
	R	0
2 connected	C	2
	R	11
3 connected	C	4
	R	3
4 connected	C	11
	R	8

Task 2 was aimed at determining if the research group, which had the conceptual metaphors pointed out to them, would do better at translating and explaining idioms based on those metaphors (see Appendix A and B, Task 2). The students were asked to give translations not using idiomatic language themselves. The purpose of this was to avoid the risk of the students giving the correct translations by simply translating the idiom word for word to Croatian in case the two counterparts had the same or similar lexical composition. Table 6 below shows the results from Task 2 for both groups. The column marked *Exp.* shows the number of students which attempted to give an explanation of the meaning of the idiom, column *Exp. Corr. w/o idioms* shows the number of students that explained the idiom correctly without using idiomatic expressions in Croatian, and column *Exp. Corr. /w idioms* shows the number of students that explained the idiom correctly using idioms in Croatian.

Table 6: Results of Task 2 for group C and group R

IDIOM		a	b	c	Exp. Corr. w/o idioms	Exp. Corr. /w idioms
All the money went down the drain .	C	10	2	5	14	3
	R	12	3	3	16	1
I felt as high as a kite .	C	9	4	4	12	0
	R	9	6	3	13	0
I was stuck in one spot for an hour trying to explain the math problem to him.	C	12	0	6	14	0
	R	10	3	3	14	3
I was over the moon when they told me.	C	6	2	10	17	1
	R	8	4	5	14	0
We have sunk a huge amount into this project without success.	C	8	10	0	12	0
	R	11	6	0	11	0
Steve couldn't contain himself any more.	C	6	1	9	13	0
	R	7	3	7	16	0
It took him a while to move on after they broke up.	C	4	0	14	15	0
	R	8	0	10	17	0
We were going round in circles trying to prove each other wrong.	C	12	1	5	13	4
	R	9	1	8	14	1
The news lifted her spirits .	C	9	4	5	15	0
	R	13	1	3	16	0
What will happen when the money dries up ?	C	13	3	1	18	0
	R	11	5	2	18	0

Table 7 below shows these results in percentages. The most interesting sentences in this task were the ones containing idioms that the students from both groups in the most part were not familiar with from before. This is because the explanations of idioms of those sentences could show us if pointing out the underlying conceptual metaphors of the idioms helps students determine their meaning even if they did not know it before. The results show that these are

sentences *I felt as high as a kite* and *We have sunk a huge amount into this project without success*.

Table 7: Overall results of translating idioms in Task 2 for group C and group R

IDIOM		% knows idiom from before	% does not know idiom from before, can guess meaning	% Exp. Corr. w/o idiom s	% Exp. Corr. /w idioms
All the money went down the drain .	C	83.3	11.1	77.7	16.6
	R	83.3	16.6	88,8	5,55
I felt as high as a kite .	C	72,2	22.2	66,6	0
	R	66.6	33.3	72,2	0
I was stuck in one spot for an hour trying to explain the math problem to him.	C	100	0	77,7	0
	R	72.2	16.6	77,7	16,6
I was over the moon when they told me.	C	88.8	11.1	94,4	5,5
	R	72.2	22.2	77,7	0
We have sunk a huge amount into this project without success.	C	44.4	55.5	66,6	0
	R	61.1	33.3	61,1	0
Steve couldn't contain himself any more.	C	83.3	5.55	72,2	0
	R	77.7	16.6	88,8	0
It took him a while to move on after they broke up.	C	100	0	83,3	0
	R	100	0	94,4	0
We were going round in circles trying to prove each other wrong.	C	94.4	5.55	72,2	22,2
	R	94.4	5.5	77,7	5,5
The news lifted her spirits .	C	77,7	22.2	83,3	0
	R	88.8	5.5	88,8	0
What will happen when the money dries up ?	C	77.7	16.6	100	0
	R	72.2	16.6	100	0

The results for the sentence *I felt as high as a kite* shows that less students were familiar with this idiom from before in the research group than in the control group. However, out of the total number of students in each group that gave the explanation of the idiom *high as a kite*, more students from the research group explained it correctly.

The results for the sentence *We have sunk a huge amount into this project without success* shows that less students were familiar with this idiom from before in the control group than in the research group and about the same number of students gave an explanation for the idiom in this sentence in each group. However, more students from the control group gave a correct explanation. These two sentences, therefore, show conflicting results regarding conceptual metaphor awareness in determining meanings of idioms.

The sentences which also produced interesting results were the ones with idioms which the same number of students before in both groups knew from. These sentences would show if there is a difference in explaining those idioms between the two groups after group R has had their underlying metaphors pointed out to them. Sentences like these are *All the money went down the drain*; *It took him a while to move on after they broke up*; and *We were going round in circles trying to prove each other wrong* (see Table 7). All three sentences show that in relation to the number of students who provided the explanation for the idioms in these sentences, students from the research group gave correct explanations in more instances than students from the control group. Out of the remaining sentences in Task 2, only one sentence besides *We have sunk a huge amount into this project without success* shows better results in students from the control group, and that was *I was over the moon when they told me*. All other sentences, in total 8 out of 10, show better results for students in the research group (see Table 7).

Task 3 was aimed at determining if the students from the research group can match the idioms in English with their translations to Croatian more successfully than the students from the control group (see Appendix A and B, Task 3). The task was formed in such a way that, firstly, certain idioms only had one possible translation, secondly, different idioms offered in Croatian could be matched with the same English translation, and thirdly, that one idiom in Croatian could be matched with different English translations. The second case was possible with the Croatian idioms *naglo postati bijesan* and *polako postajati jako ljut* where either of them could have correctly been matched with either *flip my lid* or *get all steamed up*. The third case was possible with the Croatian idiom *biti neopisivo sretan* which was listed in the

task three times, and along with *biti najsretniji na svijetu* could have one of four possible translations: *be on top of the world*, *walk on air*, *be in seventh heaven* or *be on cloud nine*. The results for this task are shown below in table 8. Since the idiom *biti neopisivo sretan* was listed three times, the results in Table 8 show the added number of correct matches with the maximum possible number 54.

Table 8: Results of task 3 for groups C and R

	Matched idioms		no. of students
1	naglo postati bijesan – flip my lid	C	13
		R	13
2	naglo postati bijesan – get all steamed up	C	3
		R	5
3	polako postajati jako ljut - get all steamed up	C	13
		R	13
4	polako postajati jako ljut – flip my lid	C	5
		R	5
5	živjeti užurbano – go in the fast lane	C	16
		R	18
6	biti najsretniji na svijetu – be on top of the world	C	16
		R	15
7	biti najsretniji na svijetu – walk on air/be in seventh heaven/be on cloud nine	C	2
		R	3
8	biti neopisivo sretan - walk on air/be in seventh heaven/be on cloud nine	C	50
		R	51
9	biti neopisivo sretan – be on top of the world	C	2
		R	3
10	proći kroz ista životna iskustva kao netko drugi – walk a mile in her shoes	C	18
		R	18
11	umrijeti – to pass away	C	18
		R	18
12	dati nekome ideju, nagnati ga da razmišlja o nečem – plant it in his	C	18

	head	R	18
13	posegnuti za ušteđevinom – dip into the bank	C	18
		R	18

As we can see from Table 8, the results in both groups were similar. Students mostly matched the sentences correctly. Since all the matches shown in Table 8 are correct and it was possible to match certain idioms with more than one translation, for the overall result we will look at the added number of the correct translations for each idiom. Table 9 below shows the added number of the correct translations for each group expressed in percentages.

Table 9: Percentage of correct matches in task 3

	Croatian idioms		% of correct matches
1	naglo postati bijesan	C	88,8
		R	100
2	polako postajati jako ljut	C	100
		R	100
3	živjeti užurbano	C	88,8
		R	100
4	biti najsretniji na svijetu	C	100
		R	100
5	biti neopisivo sretan	C	96,2
		R	100
6	proći kroz ista životna iskustva kao netko drugi	C	100
		R	100
7	umrijeti	C	100
		R	100
8	dati nekome ideju, nagnati ga da razmišlja o nečem	C	100
		R	100
9	posegnuti za ušteđevinom	C	100
		R	100

The results show that the research group had overall 100% correct matches in Task 3, and while the students in the control group mostly matched the idioms correctly, all of their matches were not correct.

Another interesting aspect of this task would be to observe the idioms with subtle differences in meaning which had more than one possible correct match to see how the students matched those idioms. As previously mentioned, these were *flip my lid* and *get all steamed up* which could have been matched with one of two different translations, and idioms *walk on air*, *be in seventh heaven*, *be on cloud nine* and *be on top of the world*, which all have very similar meanings, but only one could be matched with a different translation than the other three. Although it is completely correct to make either of the matches shown in Table 8, it was interesting to see if students would notice these slight differences in meaning or be guided by linguistic context in matching the idioms with their translations. For example, more students were guided by contextual clues and similar vocabulary in the control group than in the research group, as seen from the example of the word *world* and *svijet* in the idioms *biti najsretniji na svijetu* and *be on top of the world*. However, the same number of students from both groups, and this refers to most students, were guided by the difference in meaning of the words *flip* which describes something sudden and fast and *steamed up* which describes something slower when deciding on the matches for the idioms *naglo postati bijesan* and *postati jako ljut*.

4.6. Discussion

The results of the study will be discussed in relation to the research question posed: is it enough to make students aware of an underlying conceptual metaphor to facilitate meaning construction and understanding of the idiom in question?

Based on the results of Task 1 which determined that all students who participated in the study had similar previous knowledge of the idioms in the English language and similar language competence, we can conclude that the results of Task 2 and Task 3 in both groups can be considered valid and comparable.

The results of Task 2 showed that the students in the research group were more successful in determining the meanings of the given idioms. The risk of the students

accidentally giving the correct translation by translating the idioms word for word in case the Croatian and English counterparts had the same lexical composition was minimized by asking the students not to use idiomatic language in their explanations. These results, therefore, go in favor of concluding that making students aware of the underlying conceptual metaphors of idioms would help them determine the meanings of those idioms. However, the results of this task would be more valuable if the provided idioms were mostly unfamiliar to the participants of both groups.

In Task 3 the results were once again in favor of this conclusion, since the students from the research group did better at matching the English idioms with their meaning in Croatian. As the Croatian translations were given in a non-idiomatic form, there was less chance of guessing the correct connection based on the use of the same lexemes in case both English and Croatian had the same idiom for the given meaning.

Overall, the participants from the experimental group did better at recognizing the meanings of idioms, both those they have heard before and especially those they were not familiar with. All the tasks in the research instrument instructed them to refer to the list of metaphors as often as they could. If the students followed this instruction, we can come to the conclusion that pointing out the existence of conceptual metaphors behind idiomatic expressions and grouping the metaphors with the same target domain can benefit the recognition of correct meanings of those expressions. However, this research did have its limitations and in order to make it more relevant and valid, some changes to the research instrument, sample, and process should be made.

Firstly, to get the best results, the sample should include as many participants as it can. If possible, the study should be conducted on all students of the same class in a city. For example, all first grade students in all grammar schools in Zagreb. Secondly, to best determine the previous knowledge of the participants, the research should consist of 2 phases. Phase 1 should be an initial research with the instrument consisting of a long list of idioms as modeled by Task 1 in this research. The participants should be given a list of idioms, marking for each idiom if it is familiar or not familiar and to try to connect the idioms with the same meaning. These results should then be analyzed to filter out idioms already familiar to the students, leaving the least familiar idioms and to construct a research instrument using only these idioms and their underlying conceptual metaphors to use in phase 2. Only after completing this phase should the students from the research group be presented with the

additional resource sheet showing the underlying metaphors of the idioms the test contains. The instrument should be limited to no more than 7 conceptual metaphors with at least one pair of metaphors with the same target domain (such as LOVE IS WAR and LOVE IS A JOURNEY) to determine if the students can differentiate between idioms with conceptual metaphors with the same target domain but different source domains.

The results from this research can be used in optimizing the organization of English idiomatic expressions in L2 textbooks as well as to influence a change in teaching English idioms to L2 learners. Teaching idioms with conceptual metaphors in mind will give the learners an insight into how certain idioms are formed and help them guess the meaning of unfamiliar idioms based on the context and the conceptual metaphors they know. This could simplify teaching and learning idiomatic expressions in an already overloaded curriculum.

5. Conclusion

For a long time in Croatian schools teaching idioms was limited to teaching keyword based grouped idiomatic expressions and memorizing their meanings. With rise of cognitive linguistics, more and more researchers have started looking into idioms no longer as dead metaphors, but as expressions based on conceptual metaphors and metonymies and certain patterns of formation. Teaching idioms in key word based groups no longer made sense, and researchers started coming to the conclusion that grouping them based on their underlying metaphors and metonymies was a lot more logical and practical for the learners.

The aim of this thesis was to answer the question: besides grouping the idioms based on their conceptual metaphors, is it enough to make students aware of a cognitive metaphor on which idioms are based for them to determine the meaning of unknown idioms with that underlying metaphor in context? A study was conducted in order to answer this question. The participants of the study were divided into two groups, a control group and a research group, using a research instrument in form of a test developed specifically for this purpose. The control group and the research group were given the same tests with the difference being that the research group had the underlying metaphors of the idioms present explained on an additional resource sheet in their native language. The results of the research show that the research group had better results in determining the meanings of the unfamiliar idiomatic expressions than the control group. Additionally, they could even group the idioms based on their underlying metaphors and use those metaphors to decipher other idioms belonging to the same group.

These findings could be applied in optimizing the teaching and learning of idiomatic expressions by finding new ways to group them in English as L2 textbooks. Another possible application is helping the students recognize the meaning of idioms they may encounter outside of the classroom environment by simply teaching them conceptual metaphors.

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7. Appendices

7.1. Appendix A: Research instrument control group

Škola: _____

Razred: _____

Koliko godina učite engleski jezik? _____

Znate li neki drugi **strani** jezik bolje od engleskog? Ako znate, koji? _____

Na sva pitanja odgovorite ISKRENO i PROMIŠLJENO.

Nema ni pogrešnih ni točnih odgovora, a anketa je anonimna. Anketa će biti korisna jedino ako zabilježi stvarno stanje vašeg znanja.

1. Najprije pročitajte sve rečenice.

a) U stupac a pokraj rečenice napišite X ako značenje **podebljane fraze** ZNATE od prije.

b) U stupac b napišite X ako značenje **podebljane fraze** NE ZNATE od prije, ali vam kontekst, odnosno ostatak rečenice, pomaže u razumijevanju

c) U stupac C napišite X ako **podebljanu frazu** i sami već od ranije koristite u razgovoru

d) Povežite brojeve rečenica u kojima **podebljane fraze** imaju slično značenje. Koristite se popisom najčešćih fraza s prve stranice.

		a	b	c
1	It made my blood boil .			
2	We talked for long and covered a lot of ground			
3	We seem to be at a crossroads .			
4	You're on the right track .			
5	This belief quickly took root			
6	She often flares up over nothing			
7	After I finally graduated I was in seventh heaven .			
8	They remembered the departed in their prayers.			
9	When my mother saw the state of the house after the party, she blew her top off!			
10	I lost my cool after she told me she forgot to feed the dog.			
11	She has a fertile imagination .			
12	It's all been going downhill since the accident.			

d)

2. Najprije pročitajte sve rečenice.

a) U stupac a pokraj rečenice napišite X ako značenje **podebljane fraze** ZNATE od prije.

b) U stupac b napišite X ako značenje **podebljane fraze** NE ZNATE od prije, ali vam kontekst, odnosno ostatak rečenice, pomaže u razumijevanju

c) U stupac C napišite X ako **podebljanu frazu** i sami već od ranije koristite u razgovoru

d) U stupcu d na hrvatskom jeziku objasnite značenje **podebljanih fraza** a da sami NE KORISTITE fraze prenesenog značenja. Koristite se popisom najčešćih fraza s prve stranice za pomoć.

	a	b	c	d
All the money went down the drain .				
I felt as high as a kite .				
I was stuck in one spot for an hour trying to explain the math problem to him.				
I was over the moon when they told me.				
We have sunk a huge amount into this project without success.				
Steve couldn't contain himself any more.				
It took him a while to move on after they broke up.				
We were going round in circles trying to prove each other wrong.				
The news lifted her spirits .				
What will happen when the money dries up ?				

3. U okviru je navedeno nekoliko fraza, a niže su navedena njihova značenja. Različite fraze mogu imati slično ili isto značenje.

Fraze iz okvira zapišite pokraj njihovog značenja. Koristite se popisom najčešćih fraza s prve stranice za pomoć.

to pass away.	Get all steamed up.	walk on air
walk a mile in her shoes.		be on top of the world.
plant it in his head	go in the fast lane.	dip into the bank
To be on cloud nine.		
flip my lid.	be in seventh heaven.	

- a) naglo postati bijesan _____
- b) polako postajati jako ljut _____
- c) živjeti užurbano _____
- d) biti najsretniji na svijetu _____
- e) biti neopisivo sretan _____
- f) biti neopisivo sretan _____
- g) biti neopisivo sretan _____
- h) proći kroz ista životna iskustva kao netko drugi _____

i) umrijeti _____

j) dati nekome ideju, nagnati ga da razmišlja o nečem _____

k) posegnuti za ušteđevinom _____

7. 2 Appendix B: Research instrument research group

Često u engleskom jeziku imamo sljedeća prenesena značenja:

ljutnja je kao da gorimo ili da nam je jako vruće

ljutita osoba je kao spremnik pod pritiskom (gotovo će eksplodirati)

razgovor je kao kretanje (možemo se kretati od teme do teme, biti na pravom ili krivom putu, skretati...)

život je kao putovanje (možemo krenuti, prekinuti putovanje, započeti drugačije putovanje...)

sreća je kao biti visoko ili se penjati prema visinama, dok je nesreća biti nisko i dolje

ideje su kao biljke (mogu imati korijen, rasti, granati se, možemo ih sasjeći u korijenu)

novac je kao tekućina (može se prelijevati s jednog mjesta na drugo, može presušiti...)

Škola: _____

Razred: _____

Koliko godina učite engleski jezik? _____

Znate li neki drugi **strani** jezik bolje od engleskog? Ako znate, koji? _____

PAŽLJIVO PROČITAJTE UPUTU!

U svim jezicima, pa tako i u engleskom, često koristimo prenesena značenja.

Na primjer, o nekom uspjehu govorimo kao da govorimo o penjanju u vis, a o neuspjehu kao o silaženju ili spuštanju.

- **Penje se** po društvenoj ljestvici (=Sve je uspješniji u društvu.)

- Njegove ocjene samo **padaju i padaju**. (= Sve je neuspješniji u školi, ocjene su mu sve gore).

a) Kod odgovaranja na pitanja koristite se popisom najčešćih prenesenih značenja u engleskom jeziku koji je naveden na prvoj stranici

b) Na sva pitanja odgovorite ISKRENO i PROMIŠLJENO.

Nema ni pogrešnih ni točnih odgovora, a anketa je anonimna. Anketa će biti korisna jedino ako zabilježi stvarno stanje vašeg znanja.

1. Najprije pročitajte sve rečenice.

a) U stupac a pokraj rečenice napišite X ako značenje **podebljane fraze** ZNATE od prije.

b) U stupac b napišite X ako značenje **podebljane fraze** NE ZNATE od prije, ali vam kontekst, odnosno ostatak rečenice, pomaže u razumijevanju

c) U stupac C napišite X ako **podebljanu frazu** i sami već od ranije koristite u razgovoru

d) Povežite brojeve rečenica u kojima **podebljane fraze** imaju slično značenje. Koristite se popisom najčešćih fraza s prve stranice.

		a	b	c
1	It made my blood boil .			
2	We talked for long and covered a lot of ground			
3	We seem to be at a crossroads .			
4	You're on the right track .			
5	This belief quickly took root			
6	She often flares up over nothing			
7	After I finally graduated I was in seventh heaven .			
8	They remembered the departed in their prayers.			
9	When my mother saw the state of the house after the party, she blew her top off!			
10	I lost my cool after she told me she forgot to feed the dog.			
11	She has a fertile imagination .			
12	It's all been going downhill since the accident.			

d)

2. Najprije pročitajte sve rečenice.

a) U stupac a pokraj rečenice napišite X ako značenje **podebljane fraze** ZNATE od prije.

b) U stupac b napišite X ako značenje **podebljane fraze** NE ZNATE od prije, ali vam kontekst, odnosno ostatak rečenice, pomaže u razumijevanju

c) U stupac C napišite X ako **podebljanu frazu** i sami već od ranije koristite u razgovoru

d) U stupcu d na hrvatskom jeziku objasnite značenje **podebljanih fraza** a da sami NE KORISTITE fraze prenesenog značenja. Koristite se popisom najčešćih fraza s prve stranice za pomoć.

	a	b	c	d
All the money went down the drain .				
I felt as high as a kite .				
I was stuck in one spot for an hour trying to explain the math problem to him.				
I was over the moon when they told me.				
We have sunk a huge amount into this project without success.				
Steve couldn't contain himself any more.				
It took him a while to move on after they broke up.				
We were going round in circles trying to prove each other wrong.				
The news lifted her spirits .				

What will happen when the money dries up ?				

3. U okviru je navedeno nekoliko fraza, a niže su navedena njihova značenja. Različite fraze mogu imati slično ili isto značenje.

Fraze iz okvira zapišite pokraj njihovog značenja. Koristite se popisom najčešćih fraza s prve stranice za pomoć.

to pass away.	Get all steamed up.	walk on air
	walk a mile in her shoes.	be on top of the world.
plant it in his head	go in the fast lane.	dip into the bank
	To be on cloud nine.	
flip my lid.	be in seventh heaven.	

l) naglo postati bijesan _____

m) polako postajati jako ljut _____

n) živjeti užurbano _____

o) biti naj sretniji na svijetu _____

p) biti neopisivo sretan _____

q) biti neopisivo sretan _____

r) biti neopisivo sretan _____

s) proći kroz ista životna iskustva kao netko drugi _____

t) umrijeti _____

u) dati nekome ideju, nagnati ga da razmišlja o nečem _____

v) posegnuti za ušteđevinom _____