Thomai Dalpanagioti

Integrating frame semantic resources into EFL instruction: Developing and piloting materials for enhancing learners' metaphoric competence in EFL

Dr Thomai Dalpanagioti, a teaching fellow at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, designed and trialled a series of lessons to encourage EFL learners' use of metaphor in writing by drawing on the concept of frame semantics and using two frame-inspired lexicographic resources within a task-based approach to teaching.

Who & why? Thomai identified that while EFL students majoring in English on her first-year university writing course were exposed to plenty of metaphors in the descriptive and narrative texts used as input on the course, their own production was very limited. Her project aimed to implement a frame-inspired, task-based approach to teaching metaphor and to analyse how effective the approach was in improving the students' metaphoric competence.

How? She designed and taught a series of five lessons around a task-based approach, including a pre-task and group task which involved students in producing a written text, followed by language analysis activities. The lessons gave students opportunities to explore metaphor in both the pre-task cycle and during the language analysis tasks. During the lessons, they were encouraged to use two frame-inspired lexicographic tools, FrameNet and MetaNet. FrameNet organizes language in terms of 'frames' which classify the language elements used to describe a particular context. For example, a 'hostile encounter' frame might involve two sides, an issue that is disputed, and a purpose. MetaNet focuses more on the vocabulary used to realize particular metaphors, such as DISEASE TREATMENT IS WAR.

Thomai collected the students' writing into a corpus to analyse how their use of metaphor progressed both quantitatively and qualitatively through the 5-week course.

Results & feedback: Analysis of the student writing showed that the learners' use of metaphor both increased quantitively – they used more metaphors – and progressed qualitatively in that the types of metaphors became more varied and creative, and crucially, they developed in terms of the discourse functions they fulfilled.

> *Students start to realize the role of metaphor in description/narrative and produce more metaphors of the type that is most frequently encountered in discourse.*

At the end of the course, the students took part in focus group discussions to reflect on their learning experience and on the new resources they had used. The feedback was largely positive with students commenting on how the resources helped give them ideas and organize their thoughts. Perhaps as expected, they found the tools easier to use for receptive tasks than for production. Neither MetaNet nor FrameNet are designed specifically for EFL learners and participants commented that they were not always user-friendly. Thomai also notes that the use of this approach and these tools requires a degree of theoretical and practical knowledge from the teacher.

Conclusions: Thomai concludes that, despite the limitations mentioned above, such an approach to teaching metaphor and the use of frame-inspired tools such as FrameNet and MetaNet do have a lot of potential for use in the EFL classroom either indirectly, such as in the preparation of lesson materials, or directly by students using the tools like researchers to engage in their own linguistic analysis.

> *The lessons designed and implemented in this project show that, despite their limitations, frame semantic resources are flexible tools that can be exploited in ELT in various ways.*

Summary by Julie Moore on behalf of the ASHDRA panel