

Expectancy Violation in English Business Idioms

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Abstract— We settle in the real world by naming objects, events and determining their place in the real world. Each language creates its own world view through which the speaker organizes the content of the expression.

Language reflects the internal structure of the intellect, being common to all men. However, the reality is differently realized in different languages, in other words, different languages diversely segment the reality.

World view is a culture, knowledge and experience-based interpretation of the reality resulting from the subjective perception and conceptualization of the reality.

The article presents the search for possible connections between the meaning of English business idioms and the nature of knowledge and experience of Georgian learners' of English belonging to the upper-intermediate level of language proficiency.

To identify the peculiarities of the comprehension of different business idioms by foreign language learners, we used the expectancy violation effect.

Keywords— Expectancy violation, business idioms, culture, knowledge, experience, subjective perception, conceptualization

I. INTRODUCTION

Business English and General English have too much in common when it refers to idioms, expressions and phrases. The main difference between general English and business English is one of the vocabulary rarely used outside of a business setting but which is common in corporate settings.

While dealing with the problem of teaching figurative repertoire of business communication to nonnative speakers is the best version of the replacement of the figurative element with the non-figurative one. This strategy makes possible to repair a problematic segment of the utterance (business idiom or metaphor) but unfortunately, without preserving its expressiveness. Business communication is rich with metaphors. There is a right metaphor for any occasion: organizations are described as machine, organism, brain, culture, political system, psychic prison, system of change and flux, instrument of domination etc.

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II. METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Figurative elements really give business communication “aesthetic character”. Learners acknowledge this fact but they say: “I know my English”. We all know that learners can verbalize their thoughts, ideas and emotions without help of idioms and metaphors. The only way to direct learners' attention to the idiomatic and metaphoric world of business communication is to let them choose between long and laconic constructions. Learners realize that due to the use of figurative elements they can verbalize their thoughts, ideas and emotions “faster”. They feel that they save time, and what is more important, they don't have to produce long often fallacious constructions.

To describe the process of teaching and learning business idioms and metaphors figuratively! In the beginning learners can't see any need for “thinking outside the box”, in other words they learners can't see any need for combining elements having little or no logical connection. After being given the opportunity to choose between long and laconic constructions, learners become aware of the advantage of being “fast” and “non-fallacious”. So, learners start saving time, in other words, they start saving money. Added to everything else, learners start realizing that are powerful condensed models evoking vivid images and providing them with the opportunity to view things from a new perspective.

So, being an integral part of business communication, figurative elements aid understanding, mold our way of thinking, help capture attention, create connections with other people and embellishes the language.

The images associated with business growth are that of land, farming, plants, and seeds, in other words, farming or agriculture: look for the growth; nurture in any way possible; plant seeds; remove impediments; the green shoots of recovery; the fruit of many years of market research; sprouted all over the valley; plough profits back into the business; reap substantial rewards; weed out the less profitable items; spread into other territories; fertile area; the sales are flourishing; put down roots; seeds are planted, sown or grow etc.

III. PSYCHOLINGUISTIC EXPERIMENTS

Expectancy violation effect often occurs when the essence of the expression turns out to be completely unexpected and distinct from the predicted one. Expectations and anticipations as well as violation of expectations and anticipations arise on

the basis of two psycholinguistic phenomena - predictability and unpredictability.

We interpret violation of expectancy as the variability of the definition of the figurative element, in particular, the possibility of developing several definitions of the figurative element.

Psycholinguistic experiments focused on the understanding the essence of business idioms and metaphors are associated with the mechanism of guessing. The mentioned mechanism implies construction of hypothesis. Specificity of the constructed hypothesis is determined by the level (high/low) of language competence, degree (high/low) of frequency of the usage of figurative elements, as well as by the effect of associative precedence.

Analysis of the results of psycholinguistic experiments carried out at the University of Georgia revealed that the expectancy violation effect was extremely interesting when non-native speakers with no knowledge of business communication were asked to define business idioms (e.g. sleeping partner, bull market, bear market etc.) and metaphors (e.g. liquidity of assets, to float a loan, to be solvent etc.).

Here is the example of misinterpretation of the element "silent partner" (adequate interpretation: someone who is closely associated or involved with a business or corporation, typically through financial investment, so as to share in its risks and rewards without participating in its day-to-day operations and management).

From the point view of some learners the element "silent partner" has a negative connotation. These learners' point of view was influenced by the associations with the following elements: be as silent as the grave; be as silent as the dead.

According to some learners the element "silent partner" has a positive connotation. These learners' point of view was influenced by the associations with the following elements: silence is golden; speech is silver, silence is gold; few words, many deeds.

Having been influenced by the associations with the mentioned elements, learners developed the following definition:

- Silent partner is a very valuable partner who acts without talking much.

For some learners "silent partner" is the element with no positive or negative meaning. Having interpreted the element as neutral, these learners' point of view was influenced by the associations with the following elements: silence means consent; keep a secret.

Having been influenced by the associations with the mentioned elements, learners developed the following definition:

- Silent partner is someone who always agrees with his business partners;
- Silent partner is someone who keeps in secret his involvement in the business.

Misinterpretation of the element "sleeping partner" (adequate interpretation: someone who is closely associated or

involved with a business or corporation, typically through financial investment, and therefore shares in its risks and rewards, but does not take an active part in managing the business) is also marked by the effect of associative precedence.

Having been influenced by the association with the mentioned element, learners developed the following definition:

- Sleeping partner is someone who powerful but has not yet shown the full extent of their power.

According to some learners the element "sleeping partner" has a negative connotation. These learners' point of view was influenced by the associations with the following elements: let sleeping dogs lie; wake not a sleeping lion.

Having been influenced by the associations with the mentioned elements, learners developed the following definition:

- Sleeping partner is someone who can cause trouble if he is annoyed about something;

Learners associated "sleep" also with "laziness" and developed the following definition:

- Sleeping partner is someone who is lazy to do anything for the business.

According to some learners the element "see eye to eye" (adequate interpretation: to agree with somebody) has a negative connotation. These learners' point of view was influenced by the associations with the following elements: an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth.

Having been influenced by the associations with the mentioned elements, learners developed the following definition:

- "An eye for an eye" refers to the situation when a person who has injured another person is to be penalized to a similar degree, and the person inflicting such punishment should be the injured party.

From the point view of other learners the elements "an eye for an eye" and "a tooth for a tooth" have positive connotation. They developed the following definition:

- "An eye for an eye" refers to the situation when the guilty person is punished.

Misinterpretation of the element "put money in your mouth" (adequate interpretation: to support something that you believe in, especially by giving money) resulted from the association with the element "from" hand to mouth" (satisfying only one's immediate needs because of lack of money for future plans and investments).

Having been influenced by the association with the mentioned element, learners developed the definition with negative connotation:

- "Put money in your mouth" refers to the situation when someone lives with barely enough money or food to survive.

According to some learners the element "bull market" (adequate interpretation: a market in which share prices are rising, encouraging buying) has no negative or positive connotation. These learners developed the following "neutral"

definition:

Analysis of the results derived from the experiment revealed the following fact: learners usually give adequate interpretation to the elements with the high degree of usage and significant cross-cultural correspondence. The list of such elements looks the following way: at a loss (sell something and lose money); calculated risk (an action that may fail but has a good chance to succeed); cut one's losses (do something to stop losing money or something); etc.

IV. CONCLUSION

The results of the mentioned experiments proved that different world views manifested in different languages represent options (intentional) of the universal world view (extensional).

The method of application of the expectancy violation effect in teaching business idioms and metaphors is very effective. The method promotes understanding and expanding vocabulary.

Sharing the idea that "To err is human", we consider creation of the expectancy violation effect to prove that the more certain learners are of their wrong answer, the better they learn the right one after being corrected. "Error shock" is likely to turn into a positive stimulus and an enhancer of learners' language competence and enjoyment of learning figurative repertoire of business communication.

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