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### **Cognitive linguistics in foreign language teaching**

Foreign language teaching and learning may profit substantially when discussed from a cognitive point of view. Cognitive linguistics is no longer in its infancy but has grown up in the last years and is now mature enough to be applied.

So, these applications seem to centre mainly around language acquisition and learning issues. The state of foreign language teaching is largely lamented and new methods and strategies are strictly needed.

Starting from the assumption that nothing in language is arbitrary, it might be a good idea to make learners aware of this non-arbitrariness in order to get them understand how the foreign language works and not just to learn rules by heart. This means that subjects such as history or law are taught in English instead of in the mother tongue, thus exposing the learners of the foreign language to a degree that cannot be offered by traditional English lessons. Furthermore, in this content foreign language is used in a much more authentic and holistic way. So far, the results have been very promising.

Combining some reflections on this new kind of teaching with insights from cognitive linguistics seems to be a way of introducing the learners not only to more exposure to the language, but also offers a way to provide the learners with insights into the way language works as well as with insights into the conceptual world behind the foreign language and it tries to prevent the students from generating an indiscriminate mixture between their home culture and the foreign culture.

Considering such experience of Germany we may state that current trends in teaching foreign languages is what the Germans call “bilingual teaching”. As it is stated above, this kind of “bilingual” teaching means that social studies and others are taught in English to German learners, English is then no longer the focus of those lessons rather, the content are foreground. Thus, the learners’ “fluency” in the foreign language is improving along with their knowledge about English-speaking countries because the topics discussed would generally deal with those cultures.

“Bilingual” teaching aims at giving the learners a better chance to express themselves in the other language in a quasi-authentic situation, while the same time offering plenty of opportunities for using the foreign language. This training necessarily leads to a better command of the foreign language. As English currently seems to be the “unofficial” language of the European Union learners are prepared for a European job market where English is lingua franca that is a necessary precondition for any kind of professional success or for further studies at English-speaking university.

One of the most important tenets of cognitive linguistics<sup>1</sup> is that everything in language is permeated with meaning. Meaning, thereby, is considered to be a matter of conceptualization – of how particular language users construe the world anthropocentrically, subjectively and under the influence of a specific cultural surrounding they find themselves in.